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Credentials of Christianity

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE LECTURES. SERIES III.

✓ *Bert B. Warfield*
CREDENTIALS

OF

1882

CHRISTIANITY.

A COURSE OF LECTURES

DELIVERED AT THE REQUEST OF THE

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

WITH A PREFACE BY

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF HARROWBY, K.G.

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PREFACE.

I HAVE been requested by the Committee of the Christian Evidence Society not to allow this, the fifth volume of Lectures on Christian Evidence which have appeared under their auspices, to go forth without a few words of preface from their Chairman.

I bow to their request, though feeling most unfeignedly my incompetence for assuming such a position.

The volumes which have preceded the present series have had a wide circulation, and met with much acceptance; and it is hoped they have not been without profit to many. They were, like the present, the offering of eminent men, devoted to a holy cause: aware of the difficulties of the time, and willing to give the help of their abilities and knowledge towards their removal. They were conceived, not in the too often bitter spirit of

mere polemical controversy, but in the spirit of love—in the desire to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of perplexed and anxious enquirers after truth in the most important problems of our life.

The volume which is now presented is conceived in the same spirit.

May it have, under God's blessing, the same success!

May I be permitted to say, that much of such success—again, under God's blessing—must depend upon these Lectures being read in the same spirit in which they were written: not, as was said before, in that of mere polemical controversy, but that of an earnest search after truth, (truth of the highest and most momentous value,) and with a real desire to be enlightened and assisted in the search.

Without this real and earnest desire, indeed, no real search can be pursued, no real satisfaction can be hoped for. This is the essential difficulty to be encountered: to get the mind of the enquirers into a condition, not only to enter upon—though this is difficult enough—but still more to pursue, the enquiry earnestly. Any frivolous mind, any shallow character, any merely disputatious spirit, is capable of receiving a doubt even when there exists no previous prejudice,

no secret desire to entertain it: but how few are there in comparison, who, feeling that on such a subject doubt is unsafe, and indeed intolerable until every effort has been made to remove it, will devote days and nights, if necessary, to the study of the questions which have been raised—whether they concern criticism on the Sacred Records, or the researches of physical science, or metaphysical speculations! On all these subjects, doubts and difficulties are easy enough to raise. A patient and earnest mind is required to entertain and master the solution.

In illustration of the state of mind intended, may be cited the well-known, though often misquoted words of Tennyson in the "In Memoriam," in which he describes how his friend, though at one time vexed with the darkness of doubt, never rested till he had won his way patiently and earnestly to the light:—

"One indeed I knew,
In many a subtle question versed,
Who touched a jarring lyre at first,
But ever strove to make it true :

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

“ He fought his doubts and gathered strength,
He would not make his judgment blind,
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them : thus he came at length

“ To find a stronger faith his own.”

If the reader will but apply this earnest spirit to the perusal of the following Lectures, I cannot but hope that they will tend, not only to quiet doubt and remove difficulties, and thus to strengthen faith,—but, the careful reading of the Holy Scriptures themselves not neglected, to kindle and confirm an active, healthy, and fruitful piety: without which where is the guide in life?—where is the consolation in the contemplation of its end? May God bless the work!

HARROWBY.

OFFICE OF THE CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY,
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CONTENTS.

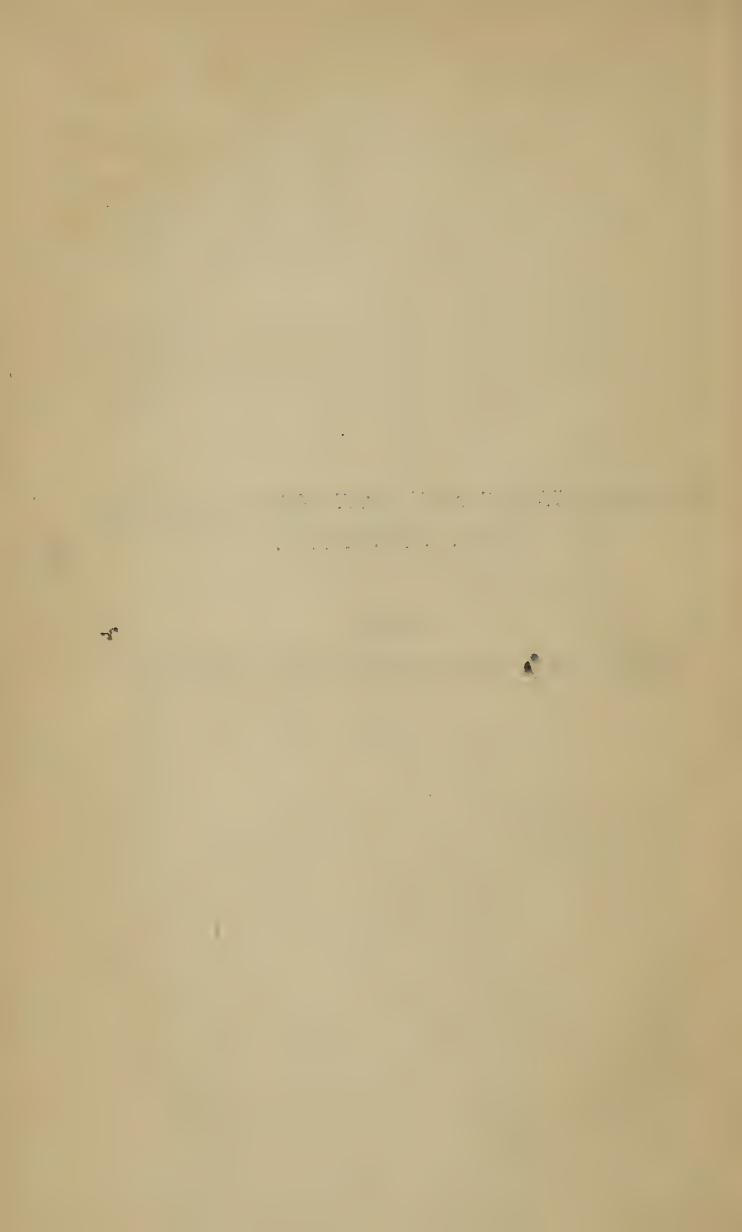
	Page
THE EVIDENCES FOR THE INSPIRATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE	1
BY THE RIGHT REV. LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE.	
THE EVIDENCE TO THE TRUTH OF CHRISTIANITY SUP- PLIED BY PROPHECY.	41
BY WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D., F.R.S.E.	
THE POSITIVE EVIDENCE IN PROOF OF THE HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES OF THE NEW TESTA- MENT	85
BY THE REV. C. A. ROW, M.A., Prebendary of St. Paul's.	
THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE REQUIRE- MENTS OF HUMAN SOCIETY	143
BY ALFRED BARRY, D.D., D.C.L., Principal of King's College, London, Canon of Worcester, and Honorary Chaplain to the Queen.	

	Page
THE EVIDENCE TO CHRISTIANITY ARISING FROM ITS ADAPTATION TO ALL THE DEEPER WANTS OF THE HUMAN HEART	181
BY THE REV. PETER LORIMER, D.D., Professor of Theology in the English Presbyterian College, London.	
THE ADEQUACY OF THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER TO ALL DEEPER QUESTIONS	221
BY THE LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.	

*THE EVIDENCES FOR THE INSPIRATION OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE.*

BY THE

RIGHT REV. LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE.



*THE EVIDENCES FOR THE INSPIRATION OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE.*

THE subject which I have undertaken to treat in this lecture is of vast extent and difficulty, and one which can only be dealt with in an oral address of reasonable duration by omitting a great deal of that which might be adduced, and by restricting the thoughts of my hearers to somewhat narrow lines.

Moreover, there are few subjects which have been more—and more earnestly—discussed of late years. The literature which has resulted is abundant; and it would be easy to refer you to works in which the Inspiration of Holy Scripture has been treated in divers ways. There is, for example, Dr. Lee's elaborate work, in which you will find reference to most of the important writers on the question, whether ancient or modern, German or English, and an examination of the various theories of Inspiration, together with a vast body of learning and discussion. Again, there is a book of a very different kind—Coleridge's "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,"—which, whether we are

thoroughly satisfied with its conclusions or not, must, I think, be regarded as marking a distinct epoch in the history of English thought upon the subject. And, once more, there is the compact essay by the Bishop of Winchester in the volume entitled "Aids to Faith,"—which, like all that comes from that prelate's pen, is learned and thoughtful, and marked by moderation and fairness. These are only a few of the treatises which are ready to hand, and in which, without going further, any one may find abundance of argument of many kinds on the great subject which we have in hand to-day. I ask myself, therefore, with some anxiety, How can I treat the subject so as to make it worth while for me to speak, and for you to listen? What shall be the special character of this lecture, which shall establish for it a reasonable claim to existence in addition to the abundant literature which exists already?

It seems to me that my only hope of answering these questions successfully is to be found in the endeavour to put before you some view of the subject, which, without pretending to be the only view, or even the principal view, shall yet be a true one, and one which I can experimentally recommend as having appeared valuable to myself. I say *experimentally recommend*, because this is emphatically the ground upon which I wish to stand while addressing you. The question of the Inspiration of Holy Scripture is one which comes too near that of the springs of our

spiritual life, and the communion of our souls with God, to permit us to treat it simply as one of the problems which human ingenuity has devised for the amusement of those who have a taste for such things; and I, for one, would not waste either my time or yours in discussing it, if I did not believe it to be possible that a candid examination, and a presentation of the manner in which it has exhibited itself to one mind, might, by God's mercy, be of use to others, which have felt the difficulty of the problem, and tried to solve it.

I begin, then, with a proposition which may seem to you strange, and perhaps, with reference to the purpose of this lecture, somewhat alarming; but which, nevertheless, it is important to premise as introductory to that particular view of the subject which I wish to place before you. The proposition is this: that the theorem expressed by these words, *The Bible is inspired*, is incapable of logical proof.

You will observe that it does not follow, that, because a theorem is incapable of proof, therefore it is not true. Many of the profoundest philosophers have questioned whether the being of God is capable of proof, and whether every suggested or supposed proof does not, when examined, turn out to involve a *petitio principii*. So also the existence of an external world, the existence of phenomena outside the perceiving mind, is well known to be as difficult to prove by formal demonstration as it is difficult prac-

tically to disbelieve. And it is certain that in mathematical subjects the primary propositions are not unfrequently (to say the least) very difficult of proof; and the Differential Calculus had been for many years a practical weapon in the hands of mathematicians, before the logical basis of its fundamental principles had ceased to be the subject of lively controversy.

Hence there is nothing very frightful, after all, in saying that the theorem, *The Bible is inspired*, is incapable of logical proof: and if it be true that this is so, then the recognition of the impossibility of dealing with the question in this form may be of use in directing our minds to possible and therefore more hopeful methods of treatment.

Now, in the sentence *The Bible is inspired*, what grammarians call the subject—viz., the Bible—is capable of very simple and complete definition. “The first simple collective title of the whole Bible,” as Professor Westcott tells us, “appears to be that which is found in Jerome in the fourth century, ‘The Divine Library’ (*Bibliotheca Divina*), which afterwards passed into common use among Latin writers, and thence into our own Anglo-Saxon language. About the same time Greek writers came to use the term ‘The Books’ (*Biblia, pl.*) for the Bible. In process of time this name, with many others of Greek origin, passed into the vocabulary of the Western Church; and in the thirteenth century, by a happy solecism, the neuter

plural came to be regarded as a feminine singular, and 'The Books' became by common consent 'The Book' (*Biblia, sing.*), in which form the word has passed into the languages of modern Europe." *

There is no doubt, therefore, as to what we mean by *the Bible*: there may, perhaps, be some little difficulty about those books which we call apocryphal—in fact, a greater difficulty than those who simply cast them out of the Sacred Volume without mercy are apparently able to appreciate; but the difficulty, whatever be its magnitude, is one which I do not intend to stir up just now; and I am content to take the Bible to mean, in the language of our sixth Article, "those canonical books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church," and which collection of canonical books is sold in the English translation in thousands and thousands of copies every year, all the world over.

The subject, "the Bible," then, is easily and completely defined; but the predicate, "inspired," does not admit of by any means so easy a definition. The word *inspired* is manifestly a figurative expression; and the difficulty is, when we endeavour to go beyond the figure and to get at the fact, to say what the fact is. Of course, it is easy to use other language, which may be more or less equivalent in meaning, and which may express to devout souls all that they wish to

* "The Bible in the Church," p. 6.

know: as, for example, I may say that by speaking of the Bible as inspired I mean that it is the work of the Spirit of God; but then, inasmuch as men wrote it, it is clear that we only shift the difficulty from the book to the men, and we have to explain what is meant by writing under the movement of the Spirit of God. Or we may put aside the human agent altogether, and simply speak of the Bible as the Word of God, the utterance of His Spirit, and so forth; and for purposes of devotion and practical godliness any such description may be sufficient. But when we endeavour to move the question out of the court of pious feeling into that of scientific definition, we are met by this insuperable difficulty, that we are predicating concerning the Bible a certain quality which would cease to be what it is if it could be found in existence anywhere else. If I say, "This rose is red," and you ask me what I mean, I can show you a part of the solar spectrum which is described by scientific men as *red*; and I can say, I mean that the colour of this rose and the colour of this portion of the solar spectrum produce the same effect upon an ordinary human eye. And in fact, when you assert any quality of anything, you mean that the thing in question agrees with respect to that quality with some standard which you can produce. But with regard to the inspiration of the Bible, it is manifest that no such test can be applied, because whatever we mean by the predicate *inspired*, at least we mean this—that it is

something that can be predicated of no other book ; the moment you predicate it of any other book, you evacuate it of the very attribute which constitutes its value. So far as Holy Scripture is historical, you can compare it with the works of a certain class of writers who have composed histories ; so far as it is poetical, you can compare it with the works of another class who have written poetry ; and you may bring it into comparison with other books as regards sublimity, or clearness, or other qualities which attach to good books : but so far as it is *inspired*, it stands removed in kind from all others ; and therefore it would seem that no scientific definition of inspiration can possibly be given, and consequently that it is impossible to demonstrate logically that "*the Bible is inspired*."

The result of this admission—in which, at all events, for argument's sake, I will assume that I have carried you with me—is this : that, instead of attempting to demonstrate that the Bible has a certain quality which I cannot define, and therefore cannot properly deal with, I shall begin at the other end, and examine in what ways the Bible stands apart from other books. Inspiration certainly, as I have already said, implies something which is unique ; if, therefore, I take a survey of the Bible, and observe in what respects it transcends other books, it may be that I shall be led to discern in it qualities so godlike and transcendent, that I shall feel that the best description of the whole is this—that it is emphatically *the Book of God* : just as

Saul was seen to be the man upon whom God's Spirit rested to make him king over Israel, because he was taller by head and shoulders than all his brethren.

But here let me interpolate a few remarks as to the class of minds, to which the discussion now proposed is chiefly directed.

I apprehend that there must necessarily be three conditions of mind in relation to this question.

First, there is the condition of perfect acquiescence in a belief concerning the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, which I should be most unwilling to disturb. To have a more or less scientific persuasion upon this and upon many other subjects, is by no means necessary for universal happiness or universal holiness. Many thousands of good men and women live upon the truth that the Bible is the Word of God without ever being troubled by considering what the proposition means, or being capable in any degree of discussing the proposition. Just as thousands of good men and women live upon the truth that the sun will rise in the morning, without having the smallest knowledge of the mechanical principles upon which the rising of the sun depend.

Then secondly, and in marked contrast with the class to which I have just referred, are those who utterly reject the notion of inspiration. This denial may take place upon many grounds, but it is not my business to discuss them. I would only remark that independently of atheism, which of course extinguishes

all possibility of inspiration, there may be a denial of this attribute of Holy Scripture, depending upon a tone of thought which is common enough just now; I mean that tone of thought which takes an entirely material and mechanical view of the universe, and which excludes the thought of a personal God as the intelligent Governor of all. I conceive that the full acceptance of this view of the universe must negative absolutely the notion of inspiration; and it is just because this is so, and because this materialistic view seems to me so painfully unsatisfactory and so unworthy of adoption, that I should be glad to press the inspired character of the Bible as an independent argument against the materialistic theory, and in favour of belief in a personal God, or rather, of belief in a Father who is in Heaven.

And, thirdly, there are those who halt between two opinions, and whose lives are harassed by doubts. I should imagine that this condition of mind was very common in our own times; but whether common or not, it is the condition which I have before me very principally in this lecture. An argument for the inspiration of Holy Scripture seems to me to be in a certain sense valuable to the man of implicit faith, because he cannot tell how soon that faith may be shaken, and experience shows that men of this class sometimes fall on a sudden, as it were, into the extremest scepticism: such an argument may possibly, though I think not probably,

be useful to the second of the three classes of mind which I have enumerated—namely, to those who have adopted some theory concerning the construction or government of the universe, which by necessary consequence negatives the idea of an inspired book: but the argument is chiefly useful to those who on moral and religious grounds hail the conception—probably the conception of their childhood—implied by such a phrase as “the Word of God,” and who yet cannot honestly shut their eyes to the difficulties which the conception involves; or who have been puzzled by the difficulties, which have been imported into the subject by the connection which some teachers have represented as existing between the grand conception of an inspired Word, and certain particular and petty theories as to the nature and limits of the assumed inspiration. I figure to myself the mental condition of a man, who doubts concerning the inspiration of Holy Scripture, as being like that of a man who is in possession of an estate, in the title to which he imagines that he has discovered some fatal flaw. The condition of this man stands out in contrast with that of him who has no doubt that his title is good, and with that of him who has no doubt that his title is bad, much as the condition of the man who is anxious upon the question of inspiration stands out in contrast with that of the man of unhesitating faith on the one side and that of

the man who has made shipwreck of his faith on the other; and the mental result in the case of the man, who is doubtful concerning his title, may illustrate that of him, who fears that he has found a flaw in his spiritual title to the possession of a book which he can call "the Word of God." His interest in the estate is very much gone; he cannot work upon it, and plant it, and improve it, and enjoy it, as he did when he was sure that it was his own; he looks back with regret to the days when he was ignorant of the secret, which he fears that he has discovered; he will owe a debt of gratitude to any one, who can give him good reason to believe that the flaw is not real, and that his title to the estate is sound.

All this being so, I venture, with humble trust that I may be assisted by that Spirit, whose operation in one special department is the subject of this lecture, to approach the question as follows.

I put on one side all consideration of special theories of inspiration,—I may have a few words to say upon them hereafter, but I entirely dismiss them, one and all, for the present,—and I ask, Is there good reason to believe that the Creator of the universe, whose existence I shall assume, has made a special Revelation of Himself to mankind, and that what we call the Bible is the vehicle of this Revelation?

The question thus put appears to me to contain

the pith and marrow of the whole subject. Grant that there is a personal God, who regards men with an infinite degree of that kindly and personal and fatherly interest, the meaning and existence of which we know from our own human experience; and then the question necessarily arises, Has any spiritual communication passed between them? has it been such a communication as is capable of being expressed in human words? and if so, does the volume which we call the Bible contain that communication?

In order to put ourselves in a position to answer these questions satisfactorily, I make the following observations concerning the Bible:—

1. In the first place, and to take the broadest and most general view, it is absolutely impossible to deny that the Bible occupies a unique position with regard to mankind. I do not say that the Bible is the only volume which professes to contain sacred writings, because undoubtedly this is not so; but certainly the Bible is bound up with the progress and civilization of the world in a manner in which no other book is: civilization and the Bible are almost co-extensive with regard to territory; and if there *be* a book which contains a special message from God, I presume that few will be found to argue in favour of any book except the Bible.

It is some advantage to have advanced even as far

as this. If there were some half a dozen or more books which came before us competing for places in our esteem, and if we had carefully to examine the claims of each and then to award a prize, the case would be different. But as Paley argues with regard to religions, so we may argue with regard to books: Paley remarks concerning Christianity, that it is either Christianity or no religion at all; or that at least no one, with whom he would be likely to have to do, would support the cause of any other religion: and so we may certainly say concerning the Bible as claiming to be a divine book: it is either this book or none; for certainly no one, with whom we are likely to have to do, will support the cause of any other book,—will not do so, at least, except as passing a universal negative upon all books, and arguing that a book revelation is a thing impossible in itself. This destructive course of argument is possible, and has sometimes been taken; and if taken and adhered to, all other argument is precluded; but once admit the possibility of a divine book, and then the claims of the Bible to be that book must be admitted on all hands to be absolutely unrivalled.

For it is a simple matter of fact, that wherever you find nations rising to what we call the highest places in civilization, the Bible and the truths contained in it are to be found likewise. Christian nations have for a long time been, are, and seem likely to continue, uppermost in the struggle for existence and for improve-

ment : unchristian nations have found this out, and own it ; and though they may not become Christian themselves, still they in a certain manner do homage to the name which Christian nations bear ; and if the name of Christian be now synonymous with that which is highest in civilization and moral power, you cannot separate this elevation from the character of the book, upon which all Christians stand as upon a common ground, and which they regard as the charter of their common faith.

I am aware of all the drawbacks which have to be made with regard to such a picture as that which I have now drawn. I know that it may be said that the progress of the Western nations depends upon other things—upon blood, upon race, upon physical and cerebral attributes, and so forth ; and I know also that it is easy to show that men do in practice very much neglect the rules and principles which the Bible contains ; that they do not act upon it, and make it their rule of life. But still you cannot get over the fact, that somehow the history of the modern world is more bound up with the Bible and its contents than with any other book or thing whatever : take the Bible away, and the modern world could not have existed ; whatever else it may be, certainly the Bible is the book of modern civilization, and that which is chiefly bound up with the improvement of our race. Of what other book could such an assertion be made, with the faintest appearance of truth ? Could we say it of

Homer? or of Plato? or of Cicero? or of any one book by which the mind of mankind has been influenced or trained? Does not the mere suggestion exhibit its own absurdity? and is it not therefore plain that the Bible has played a part in history which is different in kind, as well as in degree, from that played by any other book? is not its position with regard to moral influence upon mankind absolutely, and (so to speak) infinitely, unique?

2. But the position of the Bible with regard to civilization and influence upon human history becomes very much more remarkable, if we regard it in connection with the fact which has already been incidentally mentioned—namely, that the Bible is in reality not a *book*, but a *collection of books*, belonging to different times and different languages. The power of a good book, which Milton has described so eloquently in one of the most eloquent passages of English prose, is undoubted and unending; and one can conceive a man who would desire to be the teacher of mankind,—a Socrates, a Plato, a Confucius, a Bacon,—sitting down for the express purpose of writing a book, which should be a complete guide to the moral and religious nature of mankind; and one can conceive such an effort proving more or less successful: in fact, it would not be difficult to name books which are in a remarkable manner bound up with the moral development of mankind, and the cause of truth and true religion will

not gain by any attempt to depreciate them ; but what I am wishing to point out now, with respect to Holy Scripture, is this : that its case is totally different from that of any supposed book written by some philosopher for the edification of mankind. If there be one idea running through it, it cannot be a human idea, because the book has no one human author, nor even one human editor ; it has not even the advantage which a volume would have, that contained the wise sayings of wise men of various ages and countries, collected by some one who wished to gather together into a focus the light of the total wisdom of mankind ; on the other hand, it is somewhat like what geologists call a *conglomerate* rock,—composed of the most heterogeneous elements, brought together no one knows how, and reduced to unity by some process of fusion which human ingenuity cannot explain.

Nay,—to pursue this thought a little further, we find that our conglomerate book is composed not merely of heterogeneous, but apparently of positively conflicting elements. Take the great division of the book into Testaments. The Old Testament is a collection of Hebrew books, extending in composition over several centuries ; and these, taken together, constitute the sacred books of a certain people and a certain Church. The New Testament is a collection of Greek books, which are separated as to the period of their composition by some centuries from the former, and which not only do not constitute a portion of the

sacred books of this same people and Church, but belong to a Church opposed and hated by the former in the most intense and bitter manner. He who is the hero (so to speak with reverence) of the New Testament, is the man whom the possessors and guardians of the Old Testament persecuted and killed ; but the nation which did this annihilated itself (as it were) in the process ; at all events, it passed away as a nation, its city and Temple perished, its worship came to an end ; and then those who accepted the New Testament, instead of destroying the Old, which contained the religion of their persecutors, adopted it, bound it up with their own book, said that they were in fact only one—that one could not be understood without the other ; and they became as jealous for the honour of the Old Testament as they naturally were for the honour of the New.

Now, I say that this is a very strange history of the composition of any book ; if, having such a history, it really has a perceptible unity of purpose, and if it can be shown that one idea runs through it, this demonstrated unity is little, if at all, short of miraculous ; and, as I have already noted, it cannot be a unity which has been put into it by man, for there is no man who conceivably can have done it ; accident it seems ridiculous to talk about : the only remaining solution would seem to be that the unity is Divine, and that so, in a very intelligible sense, it may be considered as God's Book, or as the Word of God.

3. It may be worth while to press a little further the argument depending upon the heterogeneous character of the material out of which the Sacred Volume is constructed, by calling attention to the actual nature of this material. I have already ventured to use a geological phrase ; and really the phenomena of the superposition of the rocks, which form the crust of our globe, are a very admirable illustration of the superposition of books which constitute our Bible. Lowest of all lies the book of Genesis ; and the formation of it seems to puzzle human ingenuity, much as that of the rocks does. It seems to contain the *débris* of some older composition still. It is history, but very different from ordinary history ; it carries us back to a beginning which science cannot reach, and in which all is merged in the revelation of a creative Word ; and it brings us through strange tales of human sin against a Divine will, and terrible consequences of that sin, and of intercourse between man and God, until it ends with a touching history of family life, which, as a mere work of literary art, never has been and never will be surpassed.

Thus we gradually come to more regular histories ; and we have a number of books, which tell us of the ups and downs of the family which God is said to have chosen for Himself. I am not, of course, going to discuss all the historical books ; but I cannot pass them by without making this remark : that while in

many respects they are like other books, the histories which they contain differ from other histories in representing a Divine Person, who claims to be the One God of heaven and earth, as directing all that takes place. I am not saying that there may not be difficulties connected with some of the alleged words and doings of this Divine Person ; but still, taking a general view, this is *the* point which differences the history of which I am speaking from all other,—namely, that everything is represented as taking place under God's guidance, and as being what it is because He wills it so to be. However, to say nothing more just now upon this point, we have in the beginning of the Old Testament a number of historical books ; their composition clearly extends over many years (no one would venture to suggest that the early part of Genesis and the Books of Kings belonged to the same epoch of literature) ; and the authors are many—it may be doubtful how many,—but they are all connected by this common characteristic, that they are historians of the seed of Abraham.

But the Old Testament is, as we know, by no means exclusively historical : it contains poems, for example. The Psalms must be acknowledged to stand high in the poetical literature of the world : it matters not for my present purpose to inquire what authors contributed them, nor when they were composed ; but I will just observe, with reference to my general argument, that it should be borne in mind that these

Psalms have had place in the daily devotion of the Christian Church from the beginning, and no doubt will hold that place to the end of time.

Prophecy is another element of the Old Testament books. I am not going to assume the reality of the prophetic gift : I only assume that the Bible contains books, which are prophetic in form, and which profess to direct the eyes of readers to distant events, and specially to a distant Person, in whose days great changes are to be effected and great things done. And, besides history and poetry and prophecy, there are some few other books which may well be classed apart : there is such a book as that of Job, which seems to be both poetical and moral ; and there is one book, which we may describe as a love-song, but which, when we examine it in the light of the notices given in our ordinary English Bibles, we find expounded by such chapter-headings as these : " The Church's love unto Christ. She confesseth her deformity, and prayeth to be directed to His flock. Christ directeth her to the shepherds' tents, and showing His love to her, giveth her gracious promises. The Church and Christ congratulate one another." A book like this—so strange, so hard, and yet so beautiful—is, to recur once more to geological language, like a trap rock, which cuts through all the regular deposits, and exhibits itself above them all, to the astonishment of observers.

Thus curiously various are the constituents of the

first volume of our sacred book; and when it suddenly comes to an end, it is (as it were) with a fingerpost to point across the waste, which separates it from the almost equally heterogeneous collection of writings which we call the New Testament. Here again we begin with history; but the history is not exactly such as we might have expected. We have four histories, evidently very distinct, and yet evidently closely connected together, of one man: that there may be discrepancies amongst them—irreconcilable discrepancies, if you please—it is no part of my business to deny; but what I affirm, without fear of contradiction from the most sceptical, is this: that these four histories are pictures of the life and death of an actual man, whose name was Jesus, and who lived and was crucified in Palestine some eighteen centuries and a half ago. It is curious, looking at the matter from a merely human point of view, that we should have had four histories, and no more; the fact that there exist a considerable number of what are called *apocryphal Gospels*, and the strange and infinite difference between one and all of these and any one of the four canonical Gospels, only make the existence of these four the more remarkable. There, however, they are, and they can be examined and criticized; but this it is not my purpose to do: I am only describing the contents of the New Testament, not criticizing them.

We have one other historical book, which seems like a fragment; it contains much interesting matter, but

breaks off just when our interest seems to be most keenly excited as to what the history of the Church will be.

And then there is a collection of letters, written to churches, written to individuals, chiefly by apostles, which constitute an irregular kind of code of doctrine, but have little of systematic teaching, and certainly are not what would have been expected to have been the chief legacy of the apostles to the churches which they founded.

Last comes the Book of Revelation, which is full of mystery and vision and prophecy. It is a book concerning which every variety of opinion has existed—from that which would make it the prediction of all Church history to the end of time, to the most recent view of M. Ernest Rénan, who sees in it nothing but the Emperor Nero from beginning to end. But whatever the book may be, it has gradually won its way, through considerable distrust and opposition, till it has been almost universally received into the place of honour in which the English Church puts it—as the head corner-stone of the fabric of Holy Scripture.

I have thus rapidly run through the contents of the Old and New Testament, because I think that habit so much accustoms us to what I may call a book-seller's view of the Holy Scriptures—as one book out of many—that we are apt to forget the exceedingly miscellaneous and heterogeneous composition of the contents of the Sacred Volume. But, miscellaneous

and heterogeneous as that composition is, there seems to be no reason why the Holy Scriptures should not have a substantial unity,—just as the primitive and secondary and tertiary rocks, the sandstones and slates and coal measures, and the rest, have evidently been put together for a good purpose, and according to one design and law. And if we ask what is the substantial unity of these strangely various literary materials, I answer that it is to be found in the fact that they all connect themselves with the one Person of Christ; it is only as the history of His kingdom that we can understand the book, or that we can properly describe it as a book at all: the book is, in fact, the Book of Messiah. The members of the ancient Jewish Church would, I suppose, without difficulty have so spoken of their sacred writings; they regarded them as valuable in the light of the past history of their race, but still more so in the light of a prophecy of future glory; and we take up this view, only we say that the New Testament has completed the Old, and that the prophecy of one has become the history of the other; and the unity of the whole may be realized in a wonderful way, when we listen to Handel's great work, which bears the name of Messiah, and the words of which are contributed by one Testament as much as by the other.

Before pursuing this thought any further, however, I will ask you to give your attention to a few other and subsidiary considerations.

4. I should like, for example, to put before you the consideration of the efforts that have been and are being made to propagate and spread the Bible. To bring the matter into the smallest possible compass, imagine yourselves walking down Queen Victoria Street, City, and there you come upon a large building which is marked as the "Bible Society's Warehouse": this building, with all its offices and official apparatus, represents the operations of a society which ramifies in some form or other almost all over Europe, and which collects and spends yearly the revenue of a small principality in simply publishing and spreading the Holy Scriptures in all languages—especially in English. This effort of spreading this one book brings together into one active and energetic body thousands of persons who agree in scarcely anything else; and the result is that the Bible is obtainable with a facility which belongs to no other book; and it has been made so common and so cheap, that I have been told it is almost the only existing thing upon which pawnbrokers will not advance money.

I am not pronouncing any opinion upon the operations of this Society: we know very well that there is a large portion of Christendom who take a different view of the propagation of the faith, and who object to an indiscriminate spread of the Bible: but a great phenomenon like this cannot be ignored; there must be something unique in the Bible, which leads to this unique treatment. There is no other book which

could keep a great society employed in propagating it, for a single day.

In fact, the efforts made to spread the Bible are merely one particular outcome of the principle of spreading the Gospel, which, as we know, Jesus Christ impressed upon His followers: the one thing which He charged them to do was to make His Name known; and the one thing which they did—which the Church as a Church has done ever since—has been to carry out the charge. And as in thus obeying the command of Christ, Christians have ever believed that they were obeying a Divine voice, and were telling others what God had said to them, so in spreading the Holy Scriptures, men have thought that they were in a peculiar manner obeying God and making known His Word.

I have taken the Bible Society merely as a prominent institution erected especially and solely for this work; but it will be remembered that those who least adopt the principles of that Society agree as to the duty of making known the contents of the Bible. So that the argument stands thus:—There exists one book, and one only, concerning the contents of which thousands of mankind agree that they ought in some way to be made known to the whole world: for this they are willing to labour, for this they are willing to go through all kinds of trouble, for this they are willing, if need be, to encounter death itself.

Is there not, to say the least, something very

wonderful in this instinct of propagation which belongs to those who in any way have charge of the Bible?

5. Another consideration of a very different kind, but connected with the propagation of the Bible throughout the world, is the susceptibility of translation into various languages which has been proved by experience to exist. Suppose it had been desired to naturalize Homer in various languages: how difficult the task would have been! How different are the various attempts that have been made to translate Homer into English!—it may, perhaps, still be questioned both whether the problem has yet been solved, and whether it ever will be. Or suppose that the same thing had to be done with our own Shakspeare: how impracticable some of the languages would be found to be! Plain prose history, of course, admits generally of simple transmission from one tongue to another: but a large portion of the Bible is poetry; and when one reads the poetical portions, one cannot but wonder at the plasticity of the material of which the poetry is composed; the sublimity of Isaiah, the sparkling brightness of the Psalms, the solemn, dirge-like utterances of Jeremiah, are so striking in their English dress, that they seem as if they could scarcely have suffered perceptibly by transmission from the Hebrew.*

* On this subject see Professor Stanley Leathes' *Essays on The Structure of the Old Testament*: c. iv., "The Poetic

And even putting the question of poetry on one side, such narratives as the first chapter of Genesis and the Gospels (to take two widely separated examples) seem as if they were couched in terms of magnificent simplicity on purpose that they might become the property of all mankind :—"God said, Let there be light ! and there was light." "God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." "When He came nigh to the gates of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow ;

Element." Indeed, I should be glad to refer the reader to all the chapters of this interesting little volume. I quote one passage : "The characteristic features of Old Testament poetry are—first, the breadth of its intense sympathy, which is as deep as human sorrow, and as wide as mental suffering ; and, secondly, *its entire independence of merely verbal accidents, such as metre, rhyme, or the collocation of words, to which the very greatest poets owe so much.* The melody of Shakspeare, and the harmony of Milton, are among their chiefest ornaments. Though

‘ One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,’

and in this sense Shakspeare is the poet of humanity, yet the empire of his influence must be bounded by the limits of the English language ; where the knowledge of English has not penetrated, the influence of Shakspeare must be, comparatively speaking, unfelt ; but it is not too much to say, that in spite of the deficiencies of translation, the impossibility of *transplanting* the exotic peculiarities of Hebrew diction—to which, of course, the native poets, in common with all others, must necessarily owe something—the influence of David as a poet has been felt far more widely among the English-speaking population of the world than ever it was felt in Palestine of old."

and much people of the city was with her." These are two or three sentences out of ten thousand, which seem as if intended for universal currency: one can scarcely imagine a language by translation into which they would suffer the smallest loss; and though, doubtless, there are difficult passages,—nay, it may well be, some passages the actual production of which, in the full delicacy of meaning, is impossible,—still the general character of the Old and New Testament alike may be described as *translateability*: certainly the words of Christ, above all others, have that simplicity and clearness which, more than anything else, facilitate universal currency, and almost make them independent of the particular tongue in which they are conveyed.

6. A cognate feature of Holy Scripture seems to be discoverable in this—namely, its wonderful adaptation to the wants of those who have to teach their fellows. Let us bear in mind for one moment, and reflect upon, the almost universal practice of Christian teachers with regard to the lessons which they try to impress upon those whom they teach. The practice is to take a few words as a text, and to make that text the basis of exposition and exhortation, and what not. There may be among us a certain number of *Mar-texts*,—probably there are, and will be; but only consider to what a constant ordeal a book is exposed, from which, every Sunday at least, many, many thousands of fragments are extracted, and made

the basis of teaching on the most solemn subjects to millions of people ! All over Christendom this process is going on, and it has been going on from the earliest times, and yet there would seem to be no danger whatever of exhaustion ; texts are as abundant each year as they were in the year before, or as they were a century back ; and ever, as history progresses, and times change, and new forms of thought and conditions of society arise, Christian teachers are found who have something to say, and who connect their thoughts with the words of Holy Scripture.

Nor is it only one class of society to whom such teaching is addressed : it is not addressed merely to the simple and ignorant ; but University pulpits, as well as those of the village churches, are supplied with texts for sermons upon every conceivable subject from the inexhaustible store of this same wonderful book.

Commentators, meanwhile, find as much to do as preachers. That which Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers did many centuries ago, learned divines are doing still. In fact, the whole study of divinity, and all our religious controversies, and the amazing collection of theological books which you may see in any of our public libraries,—all these things bear concurrent witness to the inexhaustible character of Holy Scripture, to which I am now calling your attention by the way.

7. And even those features of Holy Scripture

which an unbeliever would be most sure to fasten upon as blemishes, though I may not be able to explain them, or say why they should have been permitted to exist, do yet not constitute any serious difficulty in the argument which I am endeavouring to set forth. I will suppose, for argument's sake, that many of the allegations which have been made concerning the Bible, and which have been thought to discredit it, are true. I will suppose its history to contain some irreconcilable points of chronology, its earliest records to partake of the obscurity which generally belongs to such records, antediluvian longevity to be an insoluble riddle, and the figures of the Pentateuch to be as erroneous as they have been represented to be. I will suppose also the books of the New Testament to contain some at least of the discrepancies which have been charged upon them. Still what does it all come to? Is there anything more strange than that which we witness in the material world? Is there anything to make it probable that the God who made the world did not make the Bible? I know not how it is, but both in material and spiritual things the ways of God seem never to have that character which may be described as optimism. The globe upon which we live has had a rude and strange history; vast, incalculable ages of wild existence have been necessary in order to produce the cosmos which we witness to-day; and even now there is much in the

government of the world, of which we can only say that God governs it, and that God's ways are different from ours. And if the phenomena of the world be such as to produce the conclusion in any man's mind that the world is not God's world, then I cannot find fault with the twin conclusion, that the Bible is not God's Book; but if the general argument in favour of the world being in the truest sense God's world, He the Maker and Governor and Father of it all, notwithstanding many anomalies and strange phenomena, be accepted, then I think it may be truly urged that the general argument in favour of Holy Scripture is also so sound and weighty that no anomalies or strange phenomena need interfere with our conclusions; or rather, to put the matter still more strongly, these very anomalies may lead us to suspect that the God of Nature and the God of Scripture are indeed one and the same.

8. These remarks, which only touch the fringe of a great subject, lead me to add a few words with regard to certain views of inspiration to which I made reference in a former part of this lecture. It will be seen how entirely independent the considerations which I have been urging are of any special theory concerning inspiration. Some have held, and some hold still, that inspiration implies that every sentence and word of Holy Scripture must be free from error; some that inspiration implies a preservation from error in matters of doctrine, though not

necessarily in matters of fact ; some have adopted the phrase of *dynamical inspiration*, as opposed to that theory which would make the sacred penman a mere machine under a Divine influence ; others, again, have—wisely, as I think—brought into prominence the fact, that the human element in the Holy Scriptures is as conspicuous as the Divine, and that neither ought to be omitted in considering what inspiration is. For my own part, I do not wish to go into any of these questions to-day ; on general grounds, I would rather apply to writing under the influence of the Spirit that language, which our Lord applied to those who are born of the Spirit, when He said, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit” : and with regard to my particular line of argument, I wish it to be observed that all question of the “How can these things be ?” lies outside the line which I have marked out for you and me to-day. My principle is, not to say what inspiration is, and then try to show that the Bible has the quality so defined, but contrariwise, to take the Bible as we find it, examine it in its construction and history and divers qualities, and then ask, “May we not properly say that a book, being such as this is, has been given by inspiration of God ?” And I would venture to say that, if this lecture has any special value, it is to be found in this suggestion of a mode of looking

at a difficult subject. Sometimes the suggestion of a point of view is the most important hint towards seeing the view to advantage: and my purpose is, not to say everything that can be said concerning inspiration, but rather to say to you, Take your Bible, look at it thus, and thus,—and I *think* you will come to the conclusion that it is in a true sense the Book of God.

All this being so, let me put before you the general view of Holy Scripture, which I wish to press upon you, in manner following:—

I find in the volume which we call the Bible a collection of literature extending over, say, 1500 years. The precise length of time is of no importance; I only wish to mark it as being a *long* time. This literature is the production of members of one family, or, if you please, one nation; but that nation, as it now exists in a scattered condition, does not own it all as national; on the contrary, it eschews the second volume of the book with unmitigated scorn. So that the book is not a national book, and therefore not the result of national prejudice or self-conceit; but it implies and is built upon the destruction of the nation to whose members, nevertheless, all the writings are due.

This literature of 1500 years, when it comes to be bound up in one volume, is found in many ways to have a substantial unity which is typified by this union in one volume. Thus, for example, the unity of God

lies at the foundation of all ; whatever doubt there may be about other things, there is none about this : "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,"—these are the first words of the book ; and though there is much concerning God's doings upon every page, and we see the hand of God (so to speak) in every point of view, and though in the New Testament we find the being of God represented in what we call "the Trinity in Unity," still the one God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, in whom we profess our faith in the Creeds, stands forth everywhere in unquestioned and undivided Majesty.

But, again, it is not a mere numerical unity (so to speak) which exhibits itself in the Scripture character of God ; there is still more conspicuously exhibited what I may call a moral unity of purpose. As soon as God has been revealed as the One Maker and Governor of all things, we seem (as it were) to hear nothing more of Him in this character, but to assume this foundation-truth, and pass on to other truths of a still more practically important kind. The fall of man, the introduction of sin and disobedience, follow immediately upon the physical creation, and engross all subsequent interest. No one can read the Scripture without perceiving and confessing that, from beginning to end, it is the history of God dealing with sin and educating sinful men. I am not now saying anything as to how God is represented as doing this ; you may suggest, if you please, so far as my argument

is concerned, that it is incredible that God should have so acted ; you may deny redemption, and all connected with it, if you please, on *à priori* grounds : all that I assert, and this cannot be denied, is that throughout Holy Scripture you find God represented as dealing with sin, the introduction of which into the world is almost the first fact related,—the actually first, indeed, after the narrative of the creation of man.

Even this kind of unity, however, is nothing as compared with that which is to be found in the fact, that the whole volume seems in one way or another to be connected with *one man*—one man who, whether He be what we Christians believe or not, is by almost universal confession “the fairest of the children of men,” is the man who has done most to purify the world from pollution, and to introduce what is good and godlike.

It would require more time than I have at my disposal to work out this thought completely ; nor is it necessary : a few hints will suffice for those who have the knowledge which I may very well assume in all of you. You see the first trace of this one man in the promise of the seed of the woman which was to bruise the head of the serpent. I do not know how you can get rid of the significance of this early trace of the one man : it is like the footstep which Robinson Crusoe saw in the sand—a small thing in itself, but pregnant with tremendous and inevitable conclusions. The chief point, however, as regards the Old Testament, is

this: that somehow or another the literature of the Jewish Church was felt to centre in one man centuries before Christ came; a general impression, as we know, pervaded not only the land of Palestine, but the whole East, that some great one would arise about the time that Jesus Christ was born, who should become universal king; and the remarkable thing is this,—that if you take that literature by itself, you find it leaving off suddenly with (as it were) a fingerpost pointing across the waste of time, and pointing to no one; but when you look at that literature as supplemented by the Christian Scriptures, you find that the fingerpost of Malachi points to Jesus Christ.

It is this introduction of unity into the whole scattered fragmentary collection of literature, by the reference of all to the person of one man, even Jesus Christ our Lord, which is to my own mind the most convincing proof that the Holy Scriptures are of God—that is, that they are inspired. For if there be this unity of purpose and construction, it seems to me that there must be also one Author and Designer: it is like looking at the parts of a machine; look at them separately, and you can neither guess who made them, nor why they were made; they may have no use, or they may be even the toys of a lunatic; but put them together, and set the machine in operation, and watch it as you see all the wheels and pinions and straps working together towards one end, and then you say, “This is manifestly the work of some great engineer; the

different parts of the machine may have been made here or there, by this man or that ; some of them may possibly be not perfectly finished, some of them may be coarser and heavier than they might have been, some may be the worse for wear and may have been taken out of other machines ; but that the whole thing as I see it is the work of one presiding mind,—of this I cannot entertain a reasonable doubt.”

The main purpose of this lecture is to apply this kind of argument to the volume of Holy Scripture.* I believe it to be one which you will find to grow upon you the more you consider it. It is an argument of a

* I take this opportunity of referring to Archbishop Trench’s Hulsean Lectures, entitled “The Fitness of Holy Scripture for unfolding the Spiritual Life of Men,”—which are, in fact, indirectly, lectures on “The Evidences for the Inspiration of Holy Scripture.” Many passages I would gladly have quoted as strongly supporting the view which I have ventured to take ; but I will content myself with the following from the Lecture on “The Unity of Scripture,” the text of which is Ephesians i. 9, 10. “But this unity of Scripture, where is it ? from what point shall we behold and recognise it ? Surely from that in which these verses which I have taken from the Epistle to the Ephesians will place us ; when we regard it as the story of the knitting anew the broken relations between the Lord God and the race of man ; of the bringing the First-begotten into the world, for the gathering together all the scattered and the sundered in Him ; when we regard it as the true *Paradise Regained*—the true *De Civitate Dei*—even by a better title than those noble books which bear these names ; the record of that mystery of God’s will which was working from the first, to the end *that in the dispensation of the fulness of time, He might gather together in one all things in Christ.*”

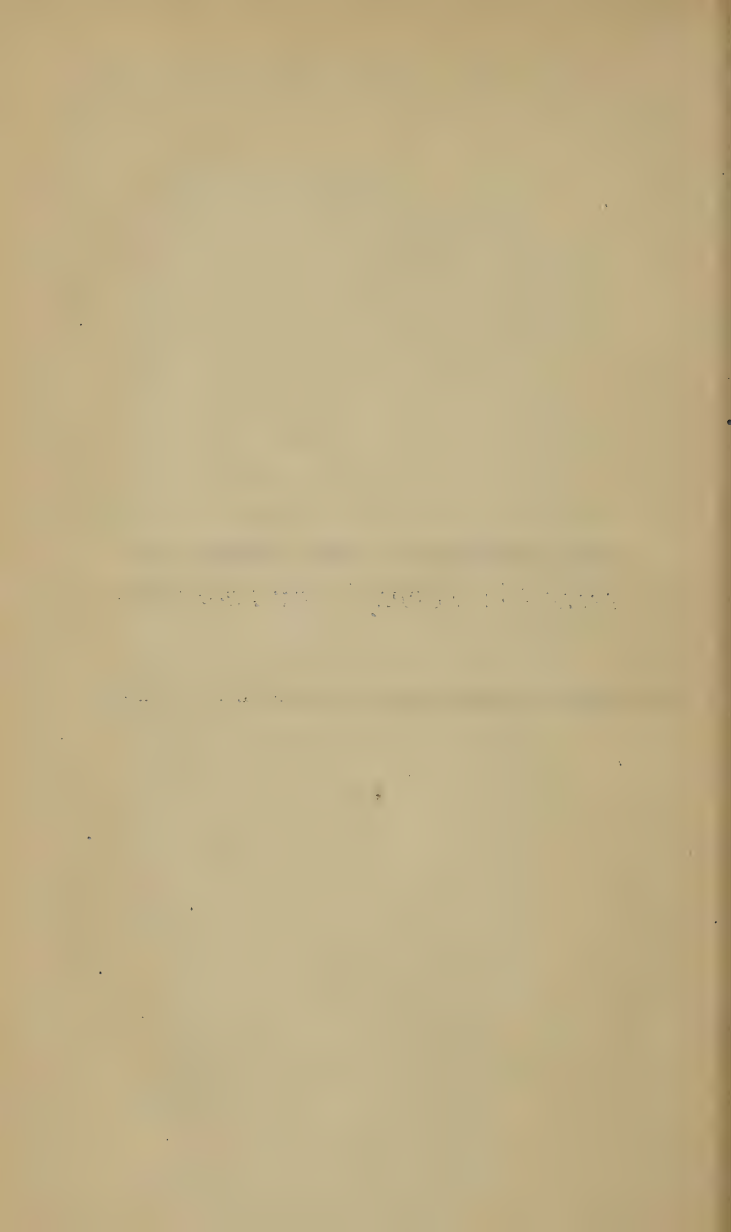
broad kind. It does not depend upon minor considerations, though it does not exclude them. It is not bound up with any special theory of the manner and kind of inspiration, though it does not require you to refrain from investigating such questions, if you think it well so to do. It rests upon the belief that a grand unity of purpose is to be discovered in Holy Scripture, that that unity of purpose is bound up with the history and life of Him whom all civilized nations have instinctively owned as their Lord and King, and that a unity of purpose of this kind cannot be explained without the supposition of unity of authorship. Who is the one author whose works extend, as we have seen, over some fifteen centuries? It cannot in the nature of things be a man : is it unreasonable or unphilosophical to say that the author is God Himself?

I have only to add that in one respect my lecture does not correspond to its advertised title. It was advertised that I would lecture upon "*The Evidences for the Inspiration of Holy Scripture.*" I dare not say that I have given you *the* evidences : that would be a task beyond my powers, and beyond my time. What I have done is to suggest one line of argument, which has been precious to *me* in thought, and which I have now endeavoured to express in words, with the hope that it may prove precious to some of *you*.

*THE EVIDENCE TO THE TRUTH OF
CHRISTIANITY SUPPLIED BY PROPHECY.*

BY

WILLIAM LINDSAY ALEXANDER, D.D., F.R.S.E.



*THE EVIDENCE TO THE TRUTH OF
CHRISTIANITY SUPPLIED BY PROPHECY.*

PROPHECY, in the sense in which the term is used in such discussions as the present, is the foretelling of future events,—the announcing that some person shall appear and act in a particular way, or that some event or series of events shall take place, of whose appearance or occurrence there is no immediate or natural probability at the time the announcement is made. This is a restricted application of the term. As the ancient prophet was the medium of communication from God to men, as he was emphatically the speaker for or in the place of God to the people, his utterances had respect to many things besides the prediction of things to come. He had to declare God's will to men, to teach Divine truth, to lay down principles of religious belief and ethical obligation, to give counsel in respect to affairs of national or personal interest, to rebuke, to warn, to comfort, to exhort, as occasion required, and as he was directed of the Lord. In the prophetical writings of Scripture, consequently, we

find many things which have no bearing on future events; indeed, the greater portion of the prophetic writings is of this character. Prophecy, therefore, in its wide sense, is whatever the prophet, as the man of God, uttered in the name of God to men. But it is not on prophecy in this wide sense that the argument now in hand has to be raised. The argument from prophecy in favour of Christianity is founded solely on what the prophet as a seer announced concerning persons and events in that future which to the men of his day was wholly hidden from view.

This argument is in itself very brief; but it is capable of being illustrated to a wide extent, and when so illustrated it acquires a cumulative force. In this respect it resembles the argument from design in proof of the existence of a Supreme Being, which may be clearly stated in a single syllogism, but is capable of being expanded so as to occupy volumes replete with interest. It resembles in this respect also its cognate argument—that from miracles—an argument which may be fitly illustrated and enforced at great length, but which was expressed in all its substantial force by Nicodemus in a single sentence, when he said to Christ, “Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do those miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him.”* It will not be expected that in a discourse like the present the attempt will be made to refer to

* John iii. 2.

all the predictions contained in Scripture upon which an argument in favour of the Divine authority of that book, and of the religion it teaches, might be raised. All I shall attempt is to state distinctly the argument itself, to determine its conditions, to show for what it is valid, to indicate the general character of the Scripture predictions, to point out their evidential force, and to meet certain objections that have been urged against this.

The argument from prophecy is addressed to those who, believing in a personal God, may not be prepared to accept the Bible as a revelation from Him, or who may desire to have their faith in that confirmed. Believing in God, such will admit that to Him all things are known—that the entire course of events in the history of the world, on to the end of time, is before His view—and that He can, if He pleases, at any moment foretell what is to happen in subsequent times. It will also be admitted that He, as Omnipotent, is able to convey into the mind of His intelligent creatures intimations or representations of future events, and to enable them to announce and describe these to others. It will further be admitted that without such communication from God no man can really predict what is to happen in the yet indiscernible and it may be far-distant future. Now these things being admitted, the argument from prophecy lays hold of certain predictions contained in the Bible, and building on them, infers that, as the

men who uttered or recorded these predictions could have done so only by Divine help, and as such help would not have been given save to such as God commissioned to speak in His name and be organs of communication from Him to men, the fact that they did utter such predictions proves that God was with them and had sent them forth. They are, therefore, to be regarded as the channels through which God has been pleased to convey His will to men,—as persons sanctioned and authorised to speak in the name of God, so that what they deliver to us as from God is to be accepted by us as indeed His word.

It will be observed for what this argument is affirmed to be valid. It is valid not to prove immediately and directly the truth of the prophet's message or utterance; what it proves is the divinity of his commission, his being sent of God and authorised to speak to men in God's name. This proved, the truth of what he utters follows as a necessary conclusion. For as all that God says must be true, what He commissions and empowers any man to speak in His name must no less be true. We thus arrive at a conviction that the Bible contains the truth of God, and that the religion it unfolds and teaches is divinely true, not immediately from the predictions contained in it, but inferentially from the fact that these predictions prove that those who delivered them were sent of God, and were authorised by Him to speak His word to men.

The argument here is essentially the same as that from miracles. A miracle does not afford any proof immediately and directly of the truth of any doctrine or message. Moral and religious truth can never be proved by any manifestation of physical power, however marvellous. What the miracle proves is that God is with the man who performs it, and that the man consequently is authorised to speak in God's name. A miracle simply announces that God is about to speak through one of His servants, and summons us to listen to what is spoken, as if God Himself addressed us by a voice from heaven. That what is so spoken is to be accepted as infallibly true, is a necessary inference from the fact that it is virtually God who speaks. It is the same with prophecy. A prediction uttered and fulfilled affords evidence that God was with the man who uttered it. He is thereby authenticated as sent by God, and what he utters in the name of God is to be accepted by us as Divine. That it is also true is inferred by us as a necessary consequence of its being Divine.

Here it is proper to note the close affinity—we might rather say the identity—of miracles and prophecy. Both belong to the same category. Their identity is sometimes expressed by saying that the one is a miracle of knowledge, and the other a miracle of power; both being thus classed as miraculous. It would perhaps be more correct to place both under the head of prophecy. For in a miracle, all that the

man, who apparently performs it, really does, is to announce—that is, foretell—that a certain event is about to happen. It is God who, by an immediate exercise of His power, produces the effect. The only difference between this and what is usually restrictively called prophecy, is that in the one case the thing foretold is an effect that is immediately to follow by an exercise of the Divine power, in the other case the thing predicted is an event which is to happen, it may be in the far-distant future, in the current history of the world. And this difference occasions a difference in the evidential incidence of the two. Both afford evidence that God is with the man, but while a miracle affords this evidence at the time it is performed, prophecy becomes evidential only when it is fulfilled. In accordance with this, when our Lord appealed to His miracles in proof that He was sent of God, His argument was, "The works that I do bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me;" but when He appealed to His predictions, His words were, "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He."* The witness which His works bare was a present witness, a witness to the men who saw these works; the witness which His predictions afforded would be rendered only in the future, when what He predicted had come to pass. Our Lord here recognised a principle which holds of all prediction.

* John v. 36; xiii. 19.

It thus appears that when a prediction is fulfilled, it is valid to prove the Divine commission and authority of the man by whom it was uttered. In order to this validity, however, certain conditions must be complied with.

First : The prophecy must be a *real prediction*—that is, it must have been uttered before the event. This condition has to be specified, because sometimes poets, and even historians, living and writing after the event, in order to give vivacity to their narrative or interest to their description, have represented some one as foretelling it at an earlier age. Thus Virgil, for instance, in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, represents Anchises as narrating to his son *Æneas* the deeds and fates of his supposed illustrious descendants in Italy during successive ages. But no one takes this for prophecy ; it is merely a narrative, partly fictitious, partly real, of what tradition or history had brought down to the poet's time, and which he puts into the form of prediction merely for the sake of effect.*

Secondly : It must *not be a mere happy guess or conjecture* as to what is to happen in the future, which in the course of events comes to be apparently realized. A poet, for instance, having no special event in view, but simply allowing the reins to his imagination, and

* So also our own Spenser, in his "*Faery Queene*," puts in the form of prediction descriptions of events in English history, and in that form makes complimentary allusions to Queen Elizabeth, that "fair vestal thronèd in the West."

drawing a picture of what will be in the future from what he wishes or hopes or conjectures may be, may sometimes hit upon what seems an anticipation of events realized in subsequent ages. Such is the famous prediction, as it has been called, in the *Medea* of Seneca. Here the poet, describing in animated strains what he imagines may be the consequences of a voyage to which he refers, and intimating that among other results that may be anticipated will be the penetrating by the adventurous mariner into regions previously unknown, breaks forth, in the conclusion of his song, into the announcement that in late years a time will come when ocean may relax the bonds of things, and the vast earth may be open, and the navigator may discover new worlds, and Thule be no longer the end of the earth.* This has been dignified into a prediction of the discovery of America by Columbus; and by some writers has been pronounced to be as clearly predictive of that event as any prophecy in the Bible can be held to be predictive of any event which may be alleged for its accomplishment. It is probable, however, that the poet had in view no age later than his own for the fulfilment of what he announces; for though he uses the expression "late years" (*seris annis*), yet, as he puts the

* "Venient annis

Sæcula seris, quibus oceanus

Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens

Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos

Detegat orbés; nec sit terris

Ultima Thule."

SENECA, *Medea* v. 374 ff.

words in the mouth of a chorus composed of persons supposed to belong to the far-back mythical ages, his own time as compared with these would be a very late age. But be this as it may, even if we take this passage as spoken from the poet's own standpoint, it cannot be regarded as containing a genuine prophecy. As has been justly observed, these verses of the Latin poet are but "a striking example of a prediction that might safely take its chance in the world, and happen what might, could not fail some time or other to meet with its accomplishment."* It is in fact nothing more than a vivid poetical picture of what might be done by men who had ships, and were likely to go on improving them, and advancing in the knowledge and practice of navigation, until the ancient boundaries were passed, and new countries were discovered. Had the poet given such a description of some new territory to be discovered as would have enabled us to identify it with America, or such a delineation of the manner and circumstances of the discovery as to make it certain that only to the enterprise of Columbus and his companions could his announcement refer, there would have been here a real prediction. But as the passage stands, there is no announcement of any *fact* or *event* in the future, the happening of which is foretold; there is simply a vague general description of what might be reasonably anticipated. It may be added, that in the immediately preceding

* Horsely, "Sermons," vol. ii. p. 75.

context the poet has ventured on a prediction somewhat more precise than that contained in the passage cited. "The Indian," he says, "drinks the gelid Araxes; the Persians imbibe the Elbe and the Rhine."* This, if it mean anything, means that the native of Hindostan shall occupy the district through which the Araxes flows, that is—the country of Armenia; and that the region which is watered by the Elbe and the Rhine shall be colonised by Persians. But if this is a prediction, it is one which has never been fulfilled, nor is ever likely to be fulfilled. So that when the poet descends from vague guesses and empty generalities to utterances which seem to point to actual persons, places, and events, he proves himself no prophet, but a mere fanciful versifier.

An English poet of the last century has introduced into one of his poems an anticipation of some of the recent applications of science to the uses of man, which has a much better claim to be regarded as a prediction than the utterance of the Roman poet. Celebrating the powers of steam, Dr. Erasmus Darwin says—

"Soon shall thy arm, unconquer'd steam, afar
Drag the slow barge, or drive the rapid car."

As this was written before the application of steam to the propelling of vessels had come into use, and long

* "Indus gelidum
Potat Araxem; Albim Persæ
Rhenumque bibunt." *Medea*, v. 372-4.

before any method of applying it to the driving of carriages had apparently occurred to any one, these lines might be hailed as a prediction of what we now see so largely realized. But no one, not even the author himself, ever dreamt of regarding them as such. They are a mere scientific prevision of what the poet, who was also a man of science, fancied might come to pass from what he knew of the powers of the element whose praises he was celebrating. If any had been inclined to base on them a claim, on the part of the poet, to be regarded as a prophet, the next following lines of his poem would be sufficient to dissipate such pretensions, for in them the ardour of his imagination carries him beyond the bounds of sea and land, and prompts him to exclaim—

“Or on wide-waving wings expanded bear
The flying chariot through the fields of air.”

This is an achievement which has not only not yet been accomplished by steam, but which only a very enthusiastic mechanician would venture on anticipating as within the possibility of ever being realized by such agency. The poet has evidently in the whole passage been simply giving the reins to fancy, and allowing her to roam at large in the “fine frenzy” of poetic excitement—

“Rapido mentem correptus ab œstro.”

From such mere conjectures, whether felicitous or otherwise, of an ardent imagination, true prophecy

as a purposed prediction of events must be distinguished.

Thirdly: It must not be a mere sagacious anticipation of a result to which concurrent events and influences are tending, and which men versed in affairs, well acquainted with human nature, and accustomed to look far before them in forming their plans of action, may foresee and foretell as likely to happen. The sagacity with which such men anticipate the course of events, and see what is about to come to pass, is often marvellous. But it is only to the *near* future that their vision extends, and it is only a probable guess after all that they may make, as to what is to happen then. The distant future is as dark to them as to other men; and as their conclusions respecting the future which is near are formed merely by a collation of probabilities, they will themselves be the first to acknowledge that, after all, what they foretell may never come to pass. Like the predictions as to the weather, which men intent on the observation of meteorological phenomena sometimes make as the result of their observations and calculations, these anticipations often turn out wonderfully true, but just as often they turn out false. From them true prophecy is distinguished as well by its precision as by its announcing events which lie so remote from the view of the prophet—remote not in time merely, but in natural probability—that no human intelligence or sagacity could conjecture their occurrence, or antici-

pate them by calculations based on facts of experience, or deduce them from what might be fairly expected from existing circumstances, capacities, or tendencies, in individuals or communities.

Fourthly: Whatever obscurity may surround a prophecy from the terms in which it is couched, a genuine prophecy must be *free from ambiguity*; i.e., it must not be so expressed that it is equally susceptible of two interpretations, one or other of which cannot but come to pass. That a certain degree of obscurity may attach to a prophecy is presumed; nay, more than this,—it must be obvious that, from the nature of the case, no genuine prophecy can be other than more or less obscure when first enunciated. For as St. Peter says, “No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation,”—which may mean either that no prophecy interprets itself, but remains obscure until it is explained by the event, or that no prophecy is of the prophet’s own interpretation, so that though he gave the prediction he could not also give the explanation of it; and the reason he assigns for this is, that “prophecy came not in the old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake being moved (or borne along) by the Holy Ghost.”* It thus appears that of a genuine prophecy it is characteristic that it should be obscure, and not carry its own interpretation in itself, or receive this from the man who utters it; and the reason assigned for this by the Apostle is

* 2 Peter i. 20, 21.

an obviously valid one ; for had the prophet spoken out of his own mind, he would, either from inability to do otherwise, or for the sake of finding acceptance for what he uttered from those to whom he uttered it, have spoken in a manner which mere human intelligence would have found no difficulty in interpreting, or would himself at least have been able to interpret what he uttered. Whereas, as the organ of the Divine Spirit, he had to announce what he himself understood not, and what could not be interpreted till the fulfilment of the prediction cast back on it a revealing light. It must be obvious also that were any prophecy to be enunciated in terms so clear and distinct, and with such exactitude of detail, that any person could at once perceive how it was to be fulfilled, its evidential value would be thereby, if not destroyed, greatly invalidated ; for it might then be said that the fulfilment had come to pass through the artifice and collusion of those who for sinister ends desired to see it fulfilled. Whilst, then, on the one hand, there must not be in prophecy such obscurity as would render it impossible with any certainty to show the correspondence between the prediction and the fulfilment, it is on the other hand necessary and desirable that the prophecy should not be set forth so plainly that it should be subjected to the suspicion that, being self-interpreting, it had fulfilled itself. But whilst prophecy is thus properly and necessarily obscure, it must not be ambiguous. And by this it

stands distinguished from the utterances of the Delphic and other oracles of heathen antiquity. These, when they assumed the form of predictions, and were not mere pieces of prudential counsel, were studiously ambiguous, and this was so notorious that it provoked alike the censure of the sage and the ridicule of the satirist.* The response of the oracle to Cræsus, when consulted by him as to the issue of the war in which he purposed to engage with the Persians, as reported by Herodotus, is well known : † in this the oracle informed the king that if he crossed the Halys he should destroy a great empire ; which might mean either the empire he was about to attack or his own, one or other of which was pretty sure to be the result of his enterprise. Equally well known is the still more ambiguous answer of the oracle to Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, when purposing to engage in war with the Romans : this was conveyed in two hexameter lines, which might with equal accuracy be rendered either, “ I say, O son of Æacus, that thou canst conquer the Romans ; thou wilt go, wilt return, never in war shalt thou perish ; ” or, “ I say, O son of Æacus, that the Romans can conquer thee ; thou

* See Aristotle, *Rhetor.* iii. c. 17 ; Plato, *Timæus*, p. 73. E. ff. ; Lucian, *Dialog. Deor.* xvi. ; Cicero, *De Divinat.* ii. 56. Porphyry ap. Euseb. *Præp. Evang.*—Tertullian says, the oracles “ ingenio ambiguitates temperant,” *Apol.* c. 22.

† Herod. i. 53 ; Cic. *De Divinat.* ii. 56. Diodori *Excerptt.* vii. 28 ap. Nov. *Script. Coll.* ed. Mai i. ii. p. 25. Comp. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* c. 26.

wilt go, wilt return never, in war shalt thou perish."* Such an oracle is a mere piece of equivocation, and has no claim to be regarded as prophecy.

Fifthly: As prophecy professes to be the utterance of the Omniscient, nothing can be accepted as such, which is not *formally delivered as from God*. Were the prophet to speak as from himself, he would thereby belie his own pretensions, and discredit his utterance. He would virtually declare that what he uttered was not a real prediction, but some vague conjecture, or probable anticipation, or fanciful description which he threw out either for his own interest, or to counsel others, or merely in the indulgence of an excited imagination. He who would be accepted as a true prophet must distinctly and unequivocally speak to men in the name of God, and present his predictions as what God had showed to him, and commanded him to make known to others.

Now where these conditions are complied with, and

* "Aio te, Æacide, Romanos vincere posse :
Ibis, redibis nunquam in bello peribis."

ENNIUS.

The meaning of these lines depends on the relative position of the two accusatives in the first line, either of which may be taken as subject, and the other as object, and the placing of the comma either before or after "nunquam" in the second. It is doubtful if either of these oracles was ever really delivered ; but as fiction must simulate truth to be accepted at all, these fictions of the historian Herodotus and the poet Ennius (if they be fictions) only show more distinctly how notoriously ambiguity was a characteristic of these oracles.

where, in the course of time and the ordinary current of events, the prediction comes to pass, irresistible evidence is thereby afforded that the man by whom it was uttered was "a man of God," one commissioned and authorised to speak to men in the name of God, and all whose utterances, therefore, professedly given as conveying to men the mind of God, are to be accepted as Divine, and therefore infallibly true. "Man," says an eloquent French writer, "by his science reigns over the past, over the present, even over the future, so far as it is determined by the known laws of the physical world. But before that future which depends only on the will of God, or the free-will of creatures, especially of creatures not yet existing, he is arrested as by an unsurmountable wall, at the base of which all the efforts of his genius expire, or at best expend themselves on vague conjectures. *There* is the sphere of Divine science; for from God nothing is hid. Infinite, alone infinite, He embraces at once all that has been, all that is, all that shall be; or rather, for God there is neither past nor future, but all is present to the eye of His indivisible and immovable eternity. That which He knows, that which He sees, He has always known, He has always seen; and He has ever been able to give the knowledge of it to a man commissioned to transmit it. If He has given it in a matter depending solely on His own will, or the free-wills of creatures, especially creatures not yet existing, there is prophecy—a Divine

act of knowledge, as other miracles are facts of Divine power." *

Passing on from these general observations on the argument from prophecy, let us now glance at the prophecies of Holy Scripture as related to that argument.

That the prediction of future events carries with it decisive evidence of the presence of God with the speaker or writer, and a consequent authentication of his pretensions as a teacher sent from God, is constantly asserted in Scripture. In proof of this I need cite only such passages as the following :—" Produce your cause, saith the Lord ; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen : let them show the former things, [*i.e.*, ancient predictions that should now be fulfilled,] what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them [that is, their event or issue] ; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods ;" " Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled : who among them can declare this, and show us former things [predictions] ? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified : or let them hear, and say, It is the truth. . . . I, even I, am the Lord ; and beside me there is no Saviour. I have declared, and saved, and made it known, when

* Barthe, "*Appel à la Raison sur la Vérité Religieuse*," p. 165.

there was no strange god among you ; and ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God ;" "Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me, since [or from the time that] I appointed the ancient people ? the things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them. Fear not, neither be afraid ; have I not told thee from that time [*i.e.*, of old], and have declared it ? ye are even my witnesses. Is there a God beside me ? yea, there is no God ; I know not any."* In all these passages God appeals to the predictions He had uttered as proving that He is indeed God, and challenges the votaries of idolatry to produce any such evidence of the claims of their deities to be regarded as divine. In other passages the effect of a true prediction in establishing the claims of any one to be received as a prophet of the Lord is enunciated. As this was the criterion God Himself proposed as that by which the pretensions of any professed prophet were to be tried, we find the prophets appealing to this in proof of their claims. Our Lord also, appearing as the Prophet of the Father, often appeals to this in proof of the divinity of His mission. And His apostles in all their controversies with the Jews appealed to the fulfilment in Jesus of the ancient predictions concerning the Messiah as affording incontestable evidence of His being the Christ : an argument which would have been quite invalid except on the assumption that

* Isa. xli. 21-23 ; xliii. 9, 11, 12 ; xliv. 7, 8.

a fulfilled prediction must be viewed as divinely uttered.

The Bible thus unequivocally adduces predictive prophecy as an adequate evidence of the presence and agency of God with and upon all by whom such prophecy is uttered, and consequently virtually pledges itself to stand or fall by the validity of this evidence. We have now, therefore, to inquire whether the predictions it contains are such as will stand the test, and thereby substantiate this proof, and vindicate the claims of the Bible to be from God, in the sense of containing what He commissioned His servants to communicate to men.

To the predictions of Scripture certain characteristics belong, which it is important to note in relation to this inquiry.

1. The predictions of Scripture *are avowedly presented as the utterances through a human medium of the Divine Spirit*. The prophets all avowedly speak only as the instruments or organs of Deity. They introduce what they have to utter with the formula, "Thus saith the Lord," or, "The Lord spake unto me, saying," or, "The word that came from the Lord, saying;" they call what they have to announce, "the burden of the Lord," or, "the vision which the Lord caused them to see;" and not unfrequently they introduce God Himself as immediately and directly speaking in the words they utter or record.*

* Compare 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; Isa. vi. 8 ff.; xlviii. 16; Jer. i.

The ancient Hebrew prophets, then, came forth avowedly as the messengers and organs of the Most High. It is important to note this, because it not only shows that their utterances satisfy one of the conditions as above indicated of genuine prediction, but it also furnishes a strong presumptive proof of the divinity of their mission. For with the fact before us that these prophets openly asserted themselves to be the bearers of a message from God, we must conclude either that they really were, and knew that they were such, or that, if not wicked impostors who deceived the people, they were themselves deceived, and mistook the hallucinations of a diseased imagination for revelations from heaven. Besides these three hypotheses, no other can be made. Were they, then, impostors? This is incredible. Assuredly these were, as the Apostle Peter calls them, "holy men," and would have shrunk with horror from the very thought of profaning the name of the Lord by using it to sanction some invention of their own. But waiving this, who ever heard of a long succession of impostors who, practising the same imposition from generation to generation, were never detected; who always used their false pretensions to serve the interests of truth, righteousness, and goodness; who had no sinister end to gain by their artifice, but not unfrequently brought upon themselves obloquy, hatred, and persecution by

4-11; Ezek. ii. 1-5; iii. 4-11, 27, etc.; Mic. iii. 8; Acts iv. 7; xi. 28; xxviii. 25-27; Rev. i. 10; iv. 2; xvii. 3; xxi. 10.

the course they pursued ; and who, notwithstanding this, so established in the minds of their nation a conviction of the reality of their pretensions, that their utterances, though often most opposed to what the people desired, and often most offensive to national pride and prejudice, have been studiously collected, have been preserved with religious care as the sacred treasure of the nation, and have been revered by them and handed to others as, "the oracles of God" ? Equally incredible is it that the prophets were themselves the victims of delusion ; for in this case they must have laboured under a species of insanity : and can anything be more incredible than that a succession of men, not connected by hereditary descent, but united simply by professional occupation, should all, each in his turn, go mad in the same way, that all should persistently use their madness to secure the best, the wisest, the most beneficent results, and that not one of them should, during a long course of ages, have been detected to be insane, but that, on the contrary, they should all, one after the other, be reputed as the wise men of their day, and as such be consulted on matters of the utmost importance by those on whom the weightiest responsibilities were laid ? This is so utterly incredible, that any one who should seriously accept it would not be unfairly judged were he to be pronounced himself insane. There only remains, therefore, the conclusion that the prophets of the Bible were true men, who,

when they said they were the organs of the Divine Spirit, said what they knew to be true.

2. Another characteristic of the Biblical prophecies is their *unity and harmony amid multiplicity and variety*. The prophecies of Scripture are very numerous, and they have proceeded from an extended series of prophets, some living at the same time, and amid similar circumstances, while others were separated by many generations, and spoke and wrote under circumstances, both personal and national, widely diverse. Many of their predictions relate to the same object, but not a few foretell events to which the others make no reference. The range of their vision is indeed immense—extending from the earliest ages down to the end of time, and embracing the characters, the histories, and the destinies of men and nations in many countries and in successive ages. Each of these prophets has his own individuality, and speaks or writes after his own fashion. Even when they refer to the same object, their discourses bear all the marks of original and independent utterances. And yet there is no incongruity or disharmony in their manifold and varied announcements. We meet with nothing that wears the appearance of an isolated representation or a mere happy individual thought. All are drawn into one connected whole. All form parts of one grand scheme, wonderful alike for its vastness and its minuteness. Though comprehending an immense range, and diverging in innumerable

ramifications, the whole is composed into one magnificent system, all the parts of which are related to each other, and all bear on *one* grand end. Whilst the fates of the most noted nations of antiquity are more or less fully touched upon, it is to the kingdom of God on the earth, and to the Messiah as the Founder and Lord of that kingdom, that the prophetic vision is chiefly turned, and on which it ever ultimately rests. Around the Person of the Messiah, as the great Central Figure, all the parts of the picture are grouped. "To Him gave all the prophets witness;" and when after a long silence the harp of prophecy was once more struck, it was of Him and of His kingdom that its notes were heard to speak. The phenomenon thus presented to us is one for which it is impossible to account, save on the supposition that what the prophets uttered were the oracles of Him to whose omniscience all persons and events past, present, and to come, in themselves, in their mutual relations, and in their relation to His kingdom in the world, are ever patent.

3. A striking characteristic of the predictive prophecies of Scripture is *their definiteness and circumstantiality*. Though conveyed often in language which is symbolical, though clothed often in the garb of the sublimest poetry, though not unfrequently abrupt, impassioned, and even rugged, the utterances of the prophets of the Bible can in no case be charged with being vague or indefinite. They are at the farthest

possible remove from those oracular utterances which, dim, pointless, and general, refer to nothing in particular, and may chance to be fulfilled in many different ways. One cannot read the predictive passages in the Bible without seeing that they point to some special object or event by which alone they are to be fulfilled. Sometimes persons are even foretold by name, as Cyrus is by Isaiah, sometimes times and places are specified when and where the event predicted is to take place; but even where such precision is not attempted, even where the object predicted is left in obscurity, there is so much of circumstantial detail as to indicate that it was not a general or accidental, but what Bacon calls a punctual fulfilment of his prediction, that the prophet would have those to whom he delivered it, or for whom he recorded it, to look. Now such definiteness and circumstantiality, while attesting the genuineness of the prediction, indicate also the presence with the prophet of Him who alone could enable any man to announce and describe what no human intelligence could have foreseen, or conjectured, or imagined.

But important as these characteristics of Scripture prophecy are in their bearing on the question of the Divine origin of the predictions contained in Scripture, it is to the *fulfilment* of these that we must chiefly make our appeal in proof of this. It is from their fulfilment that their evidential force arises; and could this not be shown, it would be of little use to urge

any other considerations with this view. Now in regard to this there are two things especially worthy of being noted. One of these is the *completeness* of their fulfilment. I speak, of course, of such predictions as relate to events that are already past, and the fulfilment of which, consequently, we are in a condition to trace. Of these we may venture to say that there is not one which has not been fulfilled in the way and according to the manner predicted. In respect of this the prophecies of Scripture will bear the closest investigation; and the more carefully they are examined, and the more minutely their correspondence with the event is scrutinised, the more will it become apparent that only as the prophets were taught of God, and spoke and wrote as His organs, could they so accurately and precisely have foretold things to come. So exact and so complete is the correspondence, that whatever obscurity or improbability may have attached to the predictions at the time they were uttered, when read in the light of subsequent events they appear more like historical narratives of what is already past, than announcements of what is to happen in the far-distant future.*

The other thing noticeable in relation to the fulfilment of the predictions of Scripture is that this has

* See this largely illustrated in Bishop Newton's "Dissertations on the Prophecies," and Dr. Keith's "Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion derived from the Literal Fulfilment of Prophecy."

not been brought about by persons who knew the prediction, and may be supposed to have contributed to its fulfilment from a desire to see it fulfilled, but in every case has happened in the ordinary course of events, in many cases by the concurrence of circumstances apparently purely accidental, and through the agency of persons who knew nothing of the prediction,—while in not a few instances the main instruments of bringing about the fulfilment have been persons who, had they foreseen the issue, would have been the last to use a single effort in the direction in which it lay. Like the Assyrian of old, whom God sent as the instrument of His righteous indignation against rebellious Israel, they “meant not so, neither did their heart think so.” They sought but to carry out their own designs, and to secure results which their own wisdom had devised, or their own lusts and passions had led them to desire. In reality they accomplished the purposes of God, and brought to pass what He had predicted by His prophets; but nothing was further from their thoughts and intentions than this. It must be apparent to every one that a prediction fulfilled by such means brings with it conclusive evidence that the man by whom it was uttered was indeed one who spoke as he was moved by the Spirit of God.

The time has passed when men ventured to pronounce the Scripture prophecies mere happy conjectures or lucky forebodings which came to be fulfilled

by chance. Such a supposition can be mathematically demonstrated to be absurd ; for if we take one hundred predictions as to what shall happen in the future, and calculate the chances of their being all fulfilled according to the laws of chance, we shall find that the chances against this are as many millions to unity. But the number of predictions in Scripture, which can be shown to have been fulfilled, greatly exceeds one hundred—to the extent almost of twice that sum ; so that the chances against their being all fulfilled run up to a number so great that it is impossible to express it in words. Thus, as has been well said, the hazard to which the unbeliever would trust in ascribing the fulfilment of the Scripture prophecies to chance is “desperate” ; for “the number of chances is far greater against him than the number of drops in the ocean, although the whole world were one globe of water.” *

The manifest absurdity of this hypothesis has led rationalists of more recent times to renounce it, and to endeavour to impair the evidence of prophecy by asserting or insinuating that the prediction, in the form in which it appears in the Bible, was given forth *after* the event, and therefore is in reality no prediction at all. There may have been, they admit, some vague poetic anticipation uttered in the earlier time, but this was turned into a definite prediction only after an event which it seemed vaguely to

* Keith on Prophecy, p. 384, 8th edit.

describe had happened, by some one who had some end to answer by this, and who had skill enough so to imitate the style and tone of the earlier writer, that he succeeded in passing off his own composition as his. Thus, for instance, the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the fall of Babylon are supposed to have been originally some mere outburst of poetic denunciation against the enemy and oppressor of Israel, which was many years later, after Babylon was taken by Cyrus, expanded and made more definite, and then substituted for the original utterance in the book of the prophet. It is supposed also that books and parts of books were written and inserted in the canon, which are the production, not of the prophet whose name they bear, but of persons living at a much later period, and who wrote after the events had occurred which they pretend to predict. The prophecies of Scripture are thus shorn of their character as predictions, and the writings containing them are degraded from their position as genuine documents to that of collections of mere forgeries more or less cleverly executed.

Now it is undoubtedly within the limits of a natural possibility that such alterations and interpolations of the sacred books may have been made, and therefore this hypothesis cannot be summarily dismissed as absurd. The *onus probandi*, however, clearly lies here on those who make such assertions; they are bound not merely to suggest the possibility of such things

being done, but to show that they have actually been done, and that not in one or two instances, but in the case of all the predictions of Scripture relating to historical events.

In this they have signally failed. Beyond bold assertion, and the setting up of a pseudo-Isaiah, a pseudo-Daniel, a second Zechariah, and such-like, and the scattering of much learned dust, they have done nothing to establish their position. Some of their attempts at proof are such patent fallacies, that the merest tyro in logic might be ashamed of them. When reduced to form, their reasoning is often a mere *petitio principii*, a reasoning in a circle. These are not real predictions, they say, because they were written after the event; and when asked for proof that they were written after the event, they adduce the predictions as containing allusions to that event. The denial of the prediction is thus made to rest on the posteriority of the book, and the posteriority of the book is made to rest on the denial of the prediction. Reasoning of this sort cannot have any weight except with those who have already accepted the conclusion it postulates.

More respect is due to the arguments of those who seek to maintain their position by showing that the language, style, and sentiments of the part containing predictions, are not such as the prophet to whom it is ascribed could have used. If this could be shown, a strong reason would undoubtedly be given for suspect-

ing the genuineness of the part libelled. But this is a test which requires to be very carefully applied, and under strict conditions, else it may lead to conclusions arbitrary and unsound; and it is one which, as it happens, hardly admits of being applied to the Hebrew documents, because, from the paucity of these, the field is too narrow for a satisfactory induction of linguistic facts. To argue that a composition, found amongst the acknowledged writings of an author, is not his because it contains words or phrases not found in these writings, or because words or phrases used in them are not found in it, is in the case of any writings but precarious reasoning at the best; but when applied to the Hebrew writings, it becomes utterly valueless, because we have no reason to believe that we possess more than a portion of the vocabulary of that language.* If, indeed, it could be shown that any word occurring in writings ascribed to a certain author was entirely unknown in his time, if its invention at a later period could be discovered, something would be done to bring into doubt the pretensions of the writing. But this, in the case of the Hebrew documents, cannot be done, and has never been attempted. All that has been done is to make collections of words said to be peculiar to a writer which are not found in the writings ascribed to him, or collections of words found in these

* See the weighty remarks of Dr. Pusey, "Minor Prophets," Part V. p. 401, just published, and which I have seen only since this lecture was written.

writings which are not found in his acknowledged writings, or collections of words used by him which are said to be words of a later date than his time, because they are not found in books of an earlier date. To expect by such means to invalidate a claim which has the sanction of centuries of unquestioned authority, indicates, on the part of those who indulge such an expectation, rather the zeal and enthusiasm of the advocate than the sagacity of the critic or the sobriety of the judge.*

Attempts have also been made to substantiate the charge of interpolation and forgery by showing that in the predictive parts of the prophetic books there are doctrines propounded which were unknown to the Hebrews of the age of the prophet to whom they are ascribed. But here also the critic builds on a most precarious foundation. For as we do not possess a

* That the patient research, the keen scrutiny, and the vast erudition of hostile critics have not been expended without suggesting difficulties in the way of the traditionary belief as to the genuineness of some of the predictions in the Bible, it would be foolish not to admit. But in reference to such the words of Bishop Thirlwall, used in his discussion of the Homeric question, may be appropriately cited, and applied *mutatis mutandis*: "This is not a case where we have to balance two arguments of a similar kind against one another, but where we have on the one side a mass of positive testimony, on the other some facts which, through our imperfect knowledge of the poet's [prophet's] life and times, we are unable to account for. Where this is so, there can be little doubt which way the principles of sound criticism require us to decide."—*Hist. of Greece*, i. 276.

full and exact history of doctrine among the Hebrews, we are not in circumstances to say at what time any special doctrine began to be familiarly known among them; and as respects those which are adduced as having been borrowed by them from other nations at a later period of their history, it may be shown of some that the alleged identity does not exist, while in regard to others the probability that the Hebrews were the lenders and not the borrowers is at least as great as the probability of the reverse.

The difficulties attaching to the belief that the Hebrew Scriptures have been interpolated in the manner alleged, are so great that the wonder is that any can seriously entertain it. He who accepts this must believe that the Jews were so careless about their sacred books, that they allowed them to be recklessly tampered with by every literary adventurer who chose to exercise his skill in imitating the style and manner of any of their great prophets: a supposition which the well-known care with which all nations that have sacred books watch over their integrity renders improbable, and which the reverence with which the Jews regarded the Scriptures, the jealousy with which they watched over them, and the almost superstitious dread with which they viewed the omission or alteration of a single jot or tittle in the writing, render utterly incredible. Such an one must believe also that the later writers not only had the audacity to give forth their writings as those of one

of the great prophets of their nation, but had the inconceivable ability to persuade the religious rulers of the nation to accept their forgeries as genuine, to carefully insert them among the acknowledged writings of the prophet, and to send them forth as genuine parts of the canon. He must believe also, that the writers were men of the loftiest genius, capable not only of so closely imitating the style of thought and language of some of the greatest of the prophets and so throwing themselves into the current of their thought and representation, that no discrepancy is discernible between what they have interpolated and the original writing, but in many instances of far surpassing them; for there can be no doubt that some of the passages pronounced spurious (Isa. xl.—xlvi., for instance) must be regarded as the very masterpiece of Hebrew literature; and yet so little were they esteemed by the Jews, that they have not cared to preserve their names, while the names of all the other prophets have been sedulously preserved. He must also believe that all these interpolations were introduced, and all these forged additions to the writings of the prophets made, during the interval which elapsed between the return of the Jews from Babylon and the execution of the Septuagint translation into Greek of the Old Testament Scriptures in which they are all contained, at a time when the public mind was keenly awake to the importance of determining what writings were to be regarded as sacred.

and when the best men of the nation, the men most noted for learning, judgment, and piety, were engaged in settling on a permanent basis the canon of Scripture. That at such a time, and under such circumstances, illegitimate additions, so extensive and so important, should be made to the sacred books of the Jews without being detected, and should be incorporated without question with the sacred canon, appears to me utterly incredible; and that this should have been believed by men of learning and ability I can regard in no other light than as affording another illustration of Pascal's famous apophthegm, "*Les incredules sont les plus credules.*"

It must also be noted that even if the latest date that can be pretended for these writings be conceded, there will still remain predictions which must be admitted to have been uttered and recorded long before what they foretell became matter of history. No ingenuity has succeeded in disposing of Daniel's four great monarchies, without admitting the fourth to be that of Rome;* and at the latest date that can be assigned for the writing of the book of Daniel, the Roman power had not made itself known beyond the confines of Italy, and certainly no human sagacity could have conjectured that the then comparatively insignificant community on the banks of the Tiber was to become that great world-power, strong as iron, that was to break in pieces and bruise the nations.

* See Dr. Pusey, "*Daniel the Prophet,*" sect. ii.

It is impossible to assign any date to the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, which shall place them posterior to the destruction of Tyre, the laying waste of Idumea, the dispersion of the Jews, and the desolation of the land of Judea; and yet these prophets have distinctly announced in regard to these, even to minute particulars, all that we see at the present day fulfilled. The predictions in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah were undoubtedly recorded centuries before they were fulfilled in the Person, character, and work of Jesus the Christ. And our Lord's own predictions concerning Himself and His religion, and concerning the fate of Jerusalem,—all of which we see fulfilled, or in the course of being fulfilled,—cannot, without violating all probability, be regarded as fabricated by His disciples after His death, and imputed to Him, but must be accepted as uttered by Himself during His ministry on earth, while as yet the things foretold were hidden in the future.* Here, then, are predictions, the genuineness of which cannot be disputed; and as on these the argument from prophecy may be safely based, it seems hardly worth the objector's while to strive to undermine the credit of the rest.

But whilst the attempt to show that the predictions of Scripture are not real predictions, but are prophecies after the event, has signally failed, the attempt itself affords the strongest testimony to the force of the

* See the author's "Christ and Christianity," Part II. ch. iii.

argument founded on these prophecies. For were not that argument in itself irrefragable, it would not be necessary to resort to such an expedient in order to set it aside. Were the predictions less remarkable for fulness and precision, or were the fulfilment of them less certain or less capable of being pointed out, or did the fulfilment of prophecy afford no sure evidence of the Divinity of the prediction and the Divine commission of the man who uttered it, the whole argument might be swept aside as baseless or fallacious. An edifice built on the sand may be contemptuously left to its fate; when men find it necessary to assail an edifice with axes and hammers, their efforts show that they feel it is built upon a rock, and that the pillars of it are strong.

The earliest of the Christian apologists whose works have come down to us* assigns the palm to

* Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. c. 30. So also Pascal : " La plus grande des preuves de Jésus Christ sont les prophéties. C'est aussi a quoi Dieu a le plus pourvu ; car l'évènement qui les a remplis est un miracle subsistant depuis la naissance de l'Eglise jusques à la fin. . . . Quand un seul homme aurait fait un livre des predictions de Jésus Christ pour le temps et pour la manière, et que Jésus Christ serait venu conformément à ces prophéties, ce serait une force infinie. Mais il y a bien plus ici. C'est une suite d'hommes, durant quatre mille ans, qui constamment et sans variation viennent l'un ensuite de l'autre prédire ce même évènement. C'est un peuple tout entier qui l'annonce, et qui subsiste depuis quatre mille années pour rendre en corps temoignage des assurances qu'ils en ont, et dont ils ne peuvent être divertis par quelques menaces et persécutions qu'on leur fasse : ceci est tout autrement considérable."—*Pensées*, t. ii. pp. 270, 271, ed. Faugère.

prophecy as affording the greatest and surest demonstration of Divine revelation. Without going so far as this, it is safe to say that in two respects it possesses special importance. In the *first* place, the evidence it supplies is derived from facts which are subject to our own observation. We need no testimony to assure us either of the prediction or of its fulfilment. The former we find recorded in the book, the latter we see actually before us in the facts of history or the existing condition of communities or nations. Prophecy thus gives us, if we may so speak, ocular demonstration of the Divinity of our religion. In the *second* place, prophecy not only proves by its fulfilment that God was with the man by whom it was uttered, and thereby shows him to be entitled to demand our submission to his words as the words of God, but it *exemplifies* the fact it is designed to confirm—viz., that God can convey, and has conveyed, to the mind of His creature knowledge so as to enable the latter to convey it to others. It thus carries us a step further than miracles ; and if it does not more certainly prove the presence of God with the teacher who on the ground of his supernatural powers demands our submission, it at least prepares us to receive his lesson, seeing he has already given us a specimen of how God may speak to us through one who is of the same nature as ourselves.*

Prophecy may thus claim a place of *primary* im-

* "Christ and Christianity," p. 248.

portance among the evidences of Christianity. On it and on miracles the claims of our religion to be revered as Divine chiefly rest. Other arguments come in as corroborative of the arguments which these supply; but it is upon these that we must ultimately fall back, if we are to maintain the position that the Bible is Divine. And this is a point to which in the present day it is especially important that prominence should be given. For there are many who profess themselves ready to accept Christianity as on the whole true, who will not admit it to be Divine. They receive it, not because it comes to them as a revelation from God, but because they find it in accordance with what their own reason dictates, or their own religious feeling approves. Such persons really believe themselves, and not the Bible; and as the Bible claims to speak to us with authority, as containing the word of God, its advocates must not shrink from asserting this claim, and must be ready to offer proof in support of it. But what shall authenticate such a claim, save some outward sign that shall prove that God was with the men who uttered what the Bible contains? "Adequate proof of a Divine revelation," says a distinguished Italian philosopher, "cannot consist in ideas, because natural ideas cannot demonstrate a fact above nature, such as is the extraordinary infusion of mysterious truths; nor in natural facts which are incompetent to certify and place on a solid basis a succession invisible and of a

different kind ; but it must emerge from supernatural phenomena which shall express sensibly and indubitably the internal correspondent fact, and so become *signs* of its reality."* Such a sign, prophecy, when fulfilled, undoubtedly gives. As has been justly said, "Of all the attributes of the God of the universe, His prescience has bewildered and baffled the most all the powers of human conception ; and an evidence of the exercise of this perfection in the revelation of what the Infinite Mind alone could make known, is the seal of God, which can never be counterfeited, affixed to the truth which it attests."† This seal God has been pleased to set broad and clear upon Holy Scripture. The number, the variety, the circumstantiality, the harmony of the Scripture prophecies, with the manifest fulfilment of those of them that point to times already past, give them a weight and force as evidences of the Divinity of Scripture which is not to be evaded or resisted. Let them not, then, be ignored, or passed by as unworthy of notice in this respect. If the argument they supply cannot be fairly refuted, let it be honestly submitted to, and let the conclusion to which it points be accepted ; let Holy Scripture have its just claims acknowledged ;

* Gioberti, "Teorica del Sovranaturale," p. 131. Torino, 1850.

† Keith, p. 9. "Quin etiam hoc non dubitans dixerim : S unum aliquid ita sit prædictum, præsensumque, ut cum evenit, ita cadat ut prædictum sit, neque in eo quidquam casu et fortuito factum esse appareat, esse certe divinationem, idque esse omnibus confitendum."—CICERO, *De Divin.* i. 55.

let it not only be honoured as a book venerable for its antiquity, and as containing much that is interesting and valuable, but be revered as a book “given by inspiration of God ;” and let the religion it teaches not be received with cold courtesy as on the whole true, but be reverently embraced as indeed Divine,—a religion, the reception of which makes men wise unto salvation, and which it is at the peril of all to whom it is made known to refuse or neglect.

I have now gone through the course of argumentation proposed. On such a subject there is nothing novel to be advanced—at least, if one confine oneself, as I have done, to the purely argumentative bearings of the question. If I have succeeded in placing these clearly before you, my aim has been attained.



THE POSITIVE EVIDENCE IN PROOF OF THE
HISTORICAL TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES OF
THE NEW TESTAMENT.

BY THE

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*THE POSITIVE EVIDENCE IN PROOF OF
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THE subject which it is my duty to treat in this Lecture involves, not a mere accessory of Christianity, but its essence. A Christianity that is devoid of the miraculous must be one from which all supernatural elements must be eliminated. This can only be accomplished by the removal out of it of the entire portraiture of the divine Christ, as He is delineated in the Gospels, and the substitution for it of a purely human Jesus. In plain words, our residuum will be a number of elevated moral precepts in a very disjointed form, and a few very uncertain facts. With the person of the divine Christ, all that is peculiar to Christianity—I may say its very essence—will disappear, and with it all pretext that it is a divine revelation. Christianity will then differ from ordinary human systems in that it has falsely made a divine life the essence and centre of its teaching. As my subject, which is to adduce historical evidence of the presence in it of the supernatural

and the divine, is one which necessarily involves a treatment of considerable length, I will address myself to it without any introductory remarks.

The Position of the Argument.

In treating of the historical evidence of the miracles alleged to have been wrought in attestation of Christianity, the question immediately presents itself, Is it necessary that the Christian advocate should adduce direct proof that every one of the miracles recorded in the New Testament was an actual occurrence? If this is not necessary (as it clearly is not), for which of them is this proof required in order that the claims of Christianity to be a divine revelation may be established? The New Testament answers this question in no ambiguous terms. While it affirms that the entire Person and work of Jesus belong to the regions of the supernatural and the divine, and that numerous miracles were wrought by Him and His early followers, it is a remarkable fact that it stakes the truth of Christianity on the performance of a single miracle alone—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This it appeals to as the one great evidential miracle, in passages far too numerous to quote within the limits of a lecture.

It will be readily conceded that all supernatural occurrences, and even very extraordinary events, demand an attestation far stronger than is required to establish the truth of ordinary ones. As the operations of the

universe are undoubtedly carried on by the action of forces which energise in conformity with invariable laws, it requires a great additional strength of testimony to prove that an event of a different order has actually occurred. But if evidence can be adduced that is adequate to prove the occurrence of a single miracle wrought in attestation of a revelation, it places all other supernatural events in connection with that revelation on the same level as the ordinary facts of history ; and the same evidence which will avail to prove the one will be fully sufficient to establish the other. The reason of this is, that it removes the *a priori* objection against such occurrences. Thus if the resurrection of Jesus Christ can be established as a fact, it becomes far more probable than otherwise that a number of other supernatural actions were performed by Him, and we can accept them on the same evidence as we require for ordinary facts. The controversy therefore between Christians and unbelievers as an historical question resolves itself into this : Is the evidence that Jesus Christ rose from the dead sufficient to prove that it was an actual occurrence ?

Modern unbelief at once attempts to bar our progress by affirming, on high *a priori* grounds, that all miracles and supernatural occurrences are alike incredible, notwithstanding any amount of historical testimony that can be adduced in their favour. If this be so, all historical inquiry respecting them is a

simple waste of time; for nothing can be more certain than that that which is impossible can never have taken place. It is clear, however, that it is impossible for me to enter on this abstract discussion in a single lecture. It could only be dealt with in a course. I must assume, therefore, that I have proved that this position is utterly untenable in my work on "The Supernatural in the New Testament." It will be sufficient in this place to observe that the principles on which it is affirmed that miracles are impossible would be fatal to our acceptance of all facts which lie outside the bounds of our previous experience.

For the purposes of this lecture, therefore, I must take it for granted that miracles are not impossible, and that their occurrence is a matter of purely historical evidence.

Further: let it be carefully observed that the evidence which is required to prove the truth of any fact depends for its amount on the degree of the probability of its occurrence. The very same action which under one set of circumstances would possess such a degree of incredibility, that we should refuse to accept it except on overwhelming evidence, we should accept as true under wholly different circumstances, on the evidence which would satisfy us of the truth of a fact in common life. Thus a miracle viewed as a bare occurrence in external nature may be an event in the highest degree improbable; but if we allow that there is a God who is the moral Governor of the uni-

verse, and that man stands in urgent need of some divine interposition in his favour (which those who accept Mr. Mill's picture of his condition as given in his posthumous Essays will not deny), then a miracle viewed as a means of attesting a revelation loses a large portion of its antecedent improbability, and becomes a question of purely historical evidence.

With these preliminary but necessary remarks, I now address myself to my more immediate subject.

The Church as a visible Institution: its bearing on the Argument.

First: We Christians are in possession of the ground. The onus of proof lies on our opponents. Let this never be overlooked in this controversy. The Christian Church exists as a fact. It can be shown, on evidence which is overwhelming, that it has existed for more than eighteen hundred years. We can prove beyond the power of gainsaying, that this institution had no existence at a particular date—say A.D. 20. We can show on no less certain evidence, that it was in existence, and in a state of most vigorous growth, years prior to A.D. 54, the date of the earliest of the Pauline Epistles. Probably not one unbeliever will dispute these facts. It is no less certain that, from the first dawn of its existence, this society has affirmed that its renewed life and energy, which was developed immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus, was due to the belief of His followers that He had risen from the

dead. On this was founded the whole of His subsequent Messianic claims, and the existence of the Church as a society.

Now observe, that although this belief of His followers does not prove the resurrection to be true, yet, supposing the fact to have been an actual occurrence, it offers an account of the origin of this great society, which even philosophy itself must allow to be entirely adequate for its origination. So far then we are in possession of the ground. The Church has ever ascribed its own origin to a cause fully adequate to account for its birth and subsequent history. If then this account is affirmed to be false, it is incumbent on those who make this affirmation to propound some other, which will fully satisfy the conditions of the case. Philosophic history cannot refuse to accept this challenge; for the Church is no abstract idea, but an institution which has exerted the mightiest influence on mankind—which originated at a definite period of historic time, and in the midst of well-known forces both of the intellectual, spiritual, and moral worlds. If it were to do so, it would confess itself in the presence of a moral miracle; for on the principles of unbelief all human developments have been the result of known forces acting in accordance with invariable laws, which it is the business of philosophy to unravel. It is absurd therefore for unbelievers to ask us to reject a cause which was adequate to have created the Church, and which this society has ever

affirmed to have been the sole ground of its origin, until they can propound another which will stand the tests of a sound philosophy. To do them justice, they have not been slow to make the attempt; but as yet they have not succeeded in propounding any theory of its origin which commands the assent of even a majority among themselves, except the vague charges that it was due to credulity and enthusiasm. On the contrary, their theories on this subject are as shifting as the sands that are on the sea-shore; and one is propounded only to be abandoned and succeeded by another. Until unbelief can effect an adequate solution of this problem, the historical presumption must remain, that the account that the Church has ever given is the true one. Otherwise it is only to ask us to accept a moral and spiritual miracle in place of an actual resurrection from the dead.

The position which Christians occupy is clear. We are fully entitled on grounds of reason to accept the account which the Church has ever given of its origin as the true one, until unbelievers are able to prove that there were in activity at the commencement of our era a number of forces which, according to the known laws of the moral and spiritual worlds, were adequate to have caused both its existence and its energetic life. Until unbelief has solved this problem, it cannot help contemplating the Church and its existence with bated breath, as having originated in some inscrutable cause, into which it cannot penetrate. On the other hand,

if we ask unbelievers to accept our position, we are bound to show that the facts which the Church alleges to be the ground of its existence rest on the highest form of historical testimony.

In examining the evidence on which the great facts of Christianity rest, it is hardly possible to over-estimate the importance of the existence of the Church as a visible institution, as constituting one of the chief factors in our historical inquiry. This has been far too frequently overlooked. We have not to trace the history of the origin of a dogma, which may be lost in the obscurities of the past, but of a mighty institution which sprang into existence at a well-known period of history; and which has acted on human nature with a power compared with which that of every other institution has been feebleness. Although in form and constitution unlike the kingdoms of the world, it has taken a place beside them, and survived the mightiest of them. Though of the humblest origin, it has overshadowed every other institution of the ancient world; it has outlived the civilization out of which it grew, and it has created a new one. The modern nations have lived with an intense vitality; yet the Christian Church has entwined itself around every portion of their historical development, and has affixed its impress on their social life, their literature, their art, and their philosophy. The historian who should attempt to give us a history of the modern world, from which the influence of Christianity was excluded,

would present us with a husk from which the kernel has been extracted.

Further, this great society originated neither in the pre-historic nor in the semi-historic ages, but in the very centre of a period pre-eminently historic. There is probably no period of time prior to that when the printing press assumed its full activity, when our historical materials are equally abundant. We have a full acquaintance with the various intellectual and moral forces then in active operation, and with the various systems of religious thought. Our materials therefore are very abundant for forming a judgment as to the adequacy of the forces which unbelievers affirm to have created the Church, or whether any other force then existing was able to have done so, except that to which it has ever assigned its origin.

I am aware that it has often been urged by opponents that the number of allusions to Christianity in pagan writers during the earlier period of its existence are very inconsiderable, and that we are obliged to rely almost exclusively on Christian sources of information. How, I ask, could it be otherwise? Was it to be expected that pagan writers would notice the progress of a religious society for which they felt a profound contempt, and whose principles they were unable to comprehend, until its existence was forced on their attention? Who but those who were directly interested in this new

society would be likely to give an account of its origin and growth? Surely those who were chiefly interested in it were likely to give us what they believed to be the true one. There is one remarkable circumstance to which I would draw your earnest attention in connection with this subject. More recent pagan literature presents us with a far more remarkable phenomenon. Even when Christianity was approaching the hour of its triumph, heathen writers seemed all but unconscious of the mighty forces which must have been in activity everywhere around them, and which shortly afterwards subverted their entire system.

The Nature and Value of an Historical Document.

I will now proceed to take a brief survey of the general character and value of the historical materials at our command.

If the four Gospels are accepted as historical, the controversy before us is ended. Nothing can be clearer than that they are instinct with a supernatural element, which it is impossible to get rid of by any carping at details. The central figure in them, the portraiture of Jesus Christ our Lord, belongs essentially to the regions of the superhuman and the divine. This being so, unbelievers are unanimous in denying their historical value, and have concentrated the whole of their critical power in attempting to prove that their authorship is uncertain, and that we

have no reliable evidence that they were in existence prior to the commencement or the middle of the second century. This being the case, I shall make no use of them as historical documents in the present lecture; but I shall establish the truth of the great facts of Christianity on grounds quite independent of their testimony. When these are proved to be historically certain, we shall then be in a position to restore the Gospels to their place in history.

While I take this position, let it be clearly understood that I am profoundly sensible of the importance of the question of the date, authorship, and character of our present Gospels. To us Christians these things are a matter of profound interest. But what I am particularly anxious to guard against is the idea—even if the assertions of unbelievers were correct, that we have no reliable evidence to prove that they were in existence prior to the first half of the second century—that the historical truth of the great facts on which Christianity rests is compromised by the comparatively late date of their publication, or the uncertainty as to the persons who may have been their actual authors. This is a ground which has been greatly overlooked by both sides in the present controversy. Yet it is a vital one. What I affirm is that we can prove the truth of the facts independently of their testimony. Let me suppose, for the sake of argument, that the apparent references in the writings of Justin Martyr are insufficient to establish the fact that he

had our present Gospels before him. Yet it is clear that he had written documents of some kind, which were narratives of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ; nor is it less certain that these accounts agreed in all their main outlines with those contained in our present Gospels. Justin only refers to *three unimportant facts* which we do not read of in our Gospels; and assuming that the apparent references to things contained in them amount to about two hundred, it follows that the documents which Justin had before him, whatever they may have been, only contained statements differing from those of our Evangelists in the proportion of three to two hundred, or one and a half per cent. This is quite sufficient for all the purposes of history. The same remark is true of all the early Christian writers. If they had not our Gospels before them, they had written and traditionary accounts agreeing in all their chief outlines with those which we now possess. Viewing the question as an historical one, we require nothing more.

The position which I am prepared to take is as follows. We have indisputable historical evidence that there was handed down in the Church a traditionary history, or one partly oral and partly written, and accepted by all the great communities of Christians, which in all its chief features agreed with the accounts contained in our present Gospels; and that this can be proved to be the same as that which was accepted by the original followers of Jesus, as a true

account of His teaching and ministry. The documents which supply us with this proof are the chief epistles of the New Testament; nearly all of which even unbelievers are compelled to assign to a period when the traditional reminiscences of the Church must have possessed the utmost freshness.

Four of the most important epistles which have been attributed to St. Paul are unanimously admitted even by unbelievers to have been written by that apostle. These are the two to the Corinthians, and that to the Romans, and the Galatians. These were certainly written within about twenty-eight years of the date of the crucifixion. The two to the Thessalonians are of a still earlier date. Their genuineness has been denied by some; but it is admitted by many eminent unbelieving critics that the grounds on which their authenticity has been denied are utterly inadequate. In fact, they bear indisputable marks of the great apostle's mind, such as could be hit by no forger. I shall therefore take it for granted that they are Paul's, dating about the year A.D. 54, and that they form the earliest documents of Christianity. Two other letters may also be assigned to the apostle with the utmost confidence, dating a few years later: that to the Philippians, and to Philemon. Critics have been found to call these in question—(what, in fact, have they not called in question?)—the former on the alleged ground that the doctrinal views of the epistle are in advance of those held by the apostle. The reader, however, who has

made himself master of his four great epistles, and of the indications of St. Paul's individuality which they afford, will feel it one of the greatest of certainties that these two epistles are the genuine products of St. Paul's mind. We have therefore, in all, eight letters written by the apostle within thirty-two years of the crucifixion. Besides these, two more—viz., that to the Ephesians, and to the Colossians—are accepted by a critic so eminent as Rénan as his. To these must be added one document of a different kind: the Apocalypse. This the various schools of unbelief are unanimous in accepting as the work of the apostle John, and composed prior to the year A.D. 70 ; and, in fact, to be the only book of the New Testament which was written by one of the original apostles of Jesus, and an eye-witness of His ministry.

Although the other writings of the New Testament are denied by unbelievers to have been composed by the persons whose names they bear, yet this by no means deprives them of a high historical value. Several of them are admitted to belong to the earliest times of Christianity ; and they must consequently have been written when the traditions of the Church possessed the utmost freshness. Thus, for example, although the Epistle to the Hebrews was, in all probability, not written by Paul, the majority of critics are of opinion that its author was a person who was in close communion with the Pauline mind ; and the Epistle of Clement proves that it is a work of primitive

antiquity. The Epistle of James is a document which must have been composed prior to the time when the Church had finally separated from the Synagogue, and is a monument of primitive Jewish Christianity. The First Epistle of Peter is not only supported by strong external testimony as being the work of that apostle ; but when its internal structure is minutely examined, it bears the clearest indications of the presence of the individuality of the Peter of the Gospels, such as no bungling forger of the ancient world would have been able to have hit. It is clear, also, that these writings, be their authors who they may, clearly reflect the genuine sentiments of the persons who composed them.

Next, let us observe that the whole of these writings must have been composed within that period when the traditionary reminiscences of the life of Jesus must have possessed the utmost freshness. The chief facts which formed the foundation of the Church's existence could not by any possibility have passed away from the recollection of its chief members ; or wholly different ones have been substituted for the true. On this point I shall shelter myself behind the high authority of Sir G. C. Lewis, who has thoroughly investigated the value of tradition as a means of transmitting historical truth in his great work on the credibility of the early Roman history. It will be only necessary to refer to his conclusions on this subject. His opinions on this point have peculiar value,

because they were not formed in reference to any religious controversy. He lays down, as is well known, that tradition is a reliable informant as to all the *great* facts of history for a period varying from one hundred to one hundred and twenty years; and that a historian who wrote within that period had within his reach ample means of trustworthy information about all important events, supposing him to have conscientiously used that which was at his command.

Let it be observed that this rule is true with respect to all great events of ordinary history, though during the latter parts of this period confusion may get into the minor details. But it is most important to observe that bodies of men which possess a kind of corporate life, possess a far greater power of accurately transmitting a traditionary history than individuals. This is greatly increased when the facts themselves form the groundwork of their corporate existence. Of all the societies that have ever existed, this has been pre-eminently the case with the Christian Church. This society is distinguished from all others by this most remarkable circumstance—which is absolutely unique in the history of institutions—that its existence and corporate life are founded on the facts of the life of an individual. On the keeping of these actively in remembrance its entire vitality depended. Induced by attachment to the person of its Founder, every member of it had forsaken his former associations, and had joined this despised and persecuted society.

It was necessary, therefore, that every convert should be instructed in the chief events of its Founder's life ; for these, and not a body of dogmatic statements, formed the bond of union in the new society, and the life of its individual members. This being so, it would have been impossible, while the grandchildren of the original followers of Jesus were alive, to have palmed off on the Church a false for a true account of its origin, or of the chief events in the life of its Founder. I by no means wish to affirm that His followers may not have been mistaken as to the nature of some of those facts : as, for instance, that they may have supposed that some events were miraculous which were not really so. But as to whether Jesus Himself laid claim to the possession of supernatural powers, an error was simply impossible. The only alternative which is open is, that either He or they were deceived as to the reality of this power, and mistook false miracles for true ones.

Let me now draw your attention to the shortness of the interval which separates these writings from the events in question. Two of our documents date within twenty-four years of the crucifixion ; four within twenty-eight years ; two within thirty-two years ; and one within forty of that event. All these are unquestionably genuine. Several of those whose authorship is disputed must have been composed only a few years subsequently to the latest of these dates. At such short intervals after the event, the Church

must have possessed the utmost freshness of traditional recollection.

Let us try to realise what these periods mean. When we speak of events nearly two thousand years old, we are in danger of losing ourselves in a misty haziness. Twenty-four years is about the interval which separates us who are in the fullest enjoyment of our faculties from the first International Exhibition. Can any of our memories fail respecting it? Is there any room for myth or legend about the matter? Twenty-eight years separate us from the expulsion of Louis Philippe from the throne of France. A few weeks ago I conversed with a person who waited on him and his Queen, immediately after their first landing in England in their assumed character of Mr. and Mrs. Smith. About thirty-two years divide us, by a single year, from the imposition of the income-tax. The period of forty years, which separates the Book of Revelation from the crucifixion, is just the interval which separates us from the last year but one of the reign of William IV., and the discussions on the Irish Municipal Corporations Bill, which occurred when I was an undergraduate at Oxford. I ask, therefore, whether while we are living, and in possession of our faculties, it would be possible for any one to impose on us a false account respecting any of the main facts connected with these events for the true one? Is it conceivable that the early followers of Jesus felt a less lively interest in the events of His

ministry, or in the facts which imparted its new life to the Church, than we do in these ordinary facts of history to which I have referred?—that they could have become oblivious as to their real nature, or that those who had forsaken all to join the new society could have been ignorant of the reasons which had induced them to submit to this great sacrifice?

The Special Value of St. Paul's Epistles as Historical Documents.

These writings, therefore, belong to the highest class of *contemporaneous historical documents*. They are letters; and I ask you to observe that no historical documents are of higher value than original letters written by active agents in events. All modern historians are deeply sensible of their high importance. One most valuable point in them is that their allusions to events are nearly always incidental. Such a mode of reference constitutes the strongest proof that the writer and his correspondents were both thoroughly acquainted with them, and mutually admitted their truth. But they also admit us to view the secret springs and motives of actions. When, as is the case with the Pauline epistles, they contain striking delineations of the character of the writer, this affords us the peculiar advantage of being able to place the author in the witness-box, and of subjecting him to a rigid cross-examination. In all these points of view they possess a great superiority as evidence over formal histories.

But these letters contain a guarantee of truthfulness as to their statements of facts which is without example in any other similar compositions. It may be objected that a letter only reflects the peculiar opinions of the writer and his friends; and that, if St. Paul adopted a peculiar Christianity of his own, these letters will only put us in possession of the views of St. Paul and his converts who had learned their Christianity from him. Happily, however, the longest of these letters is written to a church which he had never visited—viz., that of Rome—and which certainly derived its Christianity from a source quite independent of the apostle. It follows, therefore, that when he makes incidental allusions to the facts on which Christianity was founded, these facts must have been accepted as true both by St. Paul and the members of this church; and that they must have formed the groundwork of the Christianity of its founders, and of the church or churches of which they were originally members. This carries up the acceptance of these facts as the foundation of Christianity to a far earlier date than that of the composition of the Epistle.

But the two Epistles to the Corinthians and that to the Galatians afford a yet stronger guarantee of truthfulness, which places them in a class of historical documents than which none can be of higher value. In both these churches parties existed who not only disagreed with St. Paul on points which were esteemed to be of the highest importance, but who actually

denied the validity of his apostolical commission. No inconsiderable portion of these epistles is occupied in arguing the point in question. The extent of the opposition may be judged from the fact that St. Paul went the length of denouncing his opponents as corrupters of the Gospel; and they denounced him as a false apostle.

This being so, we have the strongest guarantee that both St. Paul and his opponents must have mutually accepted the chief facts on which Christianity rested. There are several direct and numerous indirect allusions to them in these epistles. They were intended to be read out before the assembled church, in the presence of his adversaries. If his fundamental facts, including his Christology, had differed in any material point from those of his Jewish opponents, he would at once have exposed himself to their denunciation as a false reporter of the facts on which their common Christianity rested; and the controversy between them must have been terminated by his disgraceful discomfiture.

But further: these epistles are not only available as evidence for the beliefs of the Church at the dates when they were written; but they carry us up to a very brief interval after the date of the crucifixion. The first testimony which they afford on this point is that of the apostle himself, whose active life as a Christian missionary dates from his conversion—which it is impossible to place later than ten years after this

event, though it was probably earlier. To this must be added the two or three years of his life as a persecutor; during which time he must have possessed the most ample means of ascertaining the nature of the facts on which the new sect professed to found its existence. These two things combined render it simply impossible that he could have been the prey of any misconception as to the primary facts on which Christianity rested. Let it be remembered that one of these facts was unquestionably the resurrection of Jesus Christ; and that within five or six years at most after its alleged occurrence, his means of investigating it must have been ample. Next, these epistles present us with the belief of the Roman Church, two at least of whose members had embraced Christianity before Paul; and that of the entire body must beyond doubt have emanated from the primitive Jewish Church. Lastly, these epistles present us with the testimony of St. Paul's opponents, who were unquestionably Judaising Christians, who professed to adhere to the opinions of the Church of Jerusalem, the heads of which were Peter, James, and John. This carries along with it that of the whole body of primitive believers. These epistles therefore establish it as an unquestionable fact, that whatever may have been the doctrinal differences between St. Paul and the Judaising Christians, they were at agreement with respect to all the great facts on which their common Christianity rested.

But further : in one of his most controversial passages, St. Paul directly asserts that he communicated to the chiefs of the primitive apostles the Gospel which he preached among the Gentiles, and that he received from them the right hand of fellowship. This assertion must have involved a direct untruth, unless the facts on which the Pauline Gospel rested were the same as those that were accepted by the Church at Jerusalem as the foundation of its Christianity. Our historical testimony therefore extends to the morning of the alleged resurrection of Jesus, and to the chief facts of His ministry, on which His claim to be the Christ rested. This testimony has not only a positive but a negative value. These epistles make it certain that there was no other set of facts which was accepted by any section of the early Church as the ground of its existence.

The points which they prove : I. The evidence of a traditionary account of the actions and teaching of our Lord.

Having thus proved that our documentary evidence belongs to the highest form of historical testimony, I will now state in the briefest possible form the chief facts which it is valid to prove. For its formal elaboration I must refer to "The Supernatural in the New Testament."

These epistles contain a small number of direct references, and a large number of indirect ones, both

to the actions and the teaching of Jesus. Both of these refer to a portraiture of Him which must have been substantially the same as that which is contained in our present Gospels, and prove beyond all question that the Christ on which the Church was built must have belonged, in the opinion both of St. Paul and the Church, to the regions of the supernatural and the divine. But the indirect references possess this additional importance, as they furnish positive proof that there must have been existing in these churches an account of the actions and teaching of Jesus Christ, either in an oral form, or in one partly oral and partly written—whichever it was is immaterial to the present argument—with which its members must have been intimately acquainted, and which in its chief outlines must have been substantially the same as that which we read in our present Gospels. If the believers to whom the Apostle wrote had not been well acquainted with such a narrative, the numerous incidental allusions to the person, work, and character of Jesus would have been simply unmeaning. The moral teaching also which is scattered throughout these epistles in the most incidental form, bears the closest analogy to that which is contained in the Gospels, and therefore proves that the Church must have been in possession of a body of teaching which was distinctly recognised as the teaching of Jesus, which must have been the same when the Apostle wrote, as that which was handed

down as His by His primitive followers ; and proves that either an oral or a written narrative must have been handed down in the Church, the same in all its chief outlines as that which was accepted by His original followers.

II. The existence of an Advanced Christology.

These epistles prove the belief in a very advanced Christology at the time when they were composed. They make it clear that the writer considered that the Person of Jesus contained in it supernatural elements of a very high order, and that this belief was shared in by the different sections of the Church. It is quite unnecessary for the purpose of this argument to attempt to define the nature of this belief in a number of formal definitions. It is sufficient for my purpose that the character must have been superhuman and supernatural. The number both of direct statements and allusions are exceedingly numerous ; no less so are those of an incidental character ; and they are all made in such a form as to prove that it never crossed the mind of the writer that those to whom he wrote did not view the Person of their common Master in some sense or other as divine. These epistles therefore afford the clearest proof that the whole of the churches to whom they are addressed ascribed a supernatural character of some kind to Jesus, and that that character was no mere Pauline invention, but must have been ascribed to Him by His primitive

followers, if not in the precise form in which Paul accepted it, yet so as to involve the presence of the superhuman. It follows therefore that, in the belief of the Church, Jesus, during the course of His ministry, must have been a worker of miracles.

The Person of Jesus must therefore have been invested with a supernatural character within a brief period after His crucifixion. It is an event without example in the history of the world, that a person *thus executed* should within such a brief space have received the honours of deification. But it was not a deification only, such as that which was rendered to a Roman emperor shortly after his decease. Between the feelings entertained towards Him and them there was not one point in common. He was not simply viewed as a supernatural being of some kind or order, but as one who was the rightful Lord of the human conscience, and the centre of all religious and moral obligation. Nor was the idea one of recent growth. The Church of Rome accepted the view no less than the churches which St. Paul had planted. The Epistles to the Corinthians and Galatians prove that St. Paul's opponents viewed the Person of Jesus as worthy of supreme regard. They must not only have accepted Him as a moral Teacher and an Example, but as the churches' sovereign Legislator and Lord. Unless this was so, a great number of St. Paul's exhortations would have been meaningless.

But if any doubt could exist on this point, one of

the writings accepted by our opponents as the only genuine one in the New Testament written by one of the original apostles, puts this beyond question I allude to the Apocalypse. This book ascribes to Jesus a very high form of Divinity, not inferior to that contained in the fourth Gospel. Yet it was composed by one of the original twelve, within forty years of the crucifixion; and as our opponents affirm the most determined enemy of the apostle Paul, whose teaching they allege that he has expressly denounced in it. We cannot therefore have a stronger evidence than the contents of this book, that the original followers of Jesus must have ascribed to Him a Divine character of some sort. I do not deny that the Christology of John may have become more elevated during the interval in question; but it is simply unbelievable that a companion of Jesus should have metamorphosed Him into the Divine Christ of this book, if during the period he had conversed with Him He had presented nothing more than the aspect of an ordinary Jewish Rabbi; or if he had become a prey to such a mental hallucination, that the portraiture could have been accepted by the Church as true, while its traditions must have been in a state of the utmost freshness, and other witnesses of His ministry were unquestionably surviving. These considerations therefore prove that the idea that Jesus was possessed of a supernatural character, or in other words, that He was a worker of miracles, was not a

mere gradual development, but that it must have been accepted by His followers during His public ministry. It follows, therefore, that the mythic, legendary, and development theories, whereby the ascription to Him of a halo of miracles has been attempted to be accounted for, utterly fail to grapple with the historical conditions of the case. These require ample periods of time during which they can be gradually formed. The rigid facts of history have no time to concede for their formation.

III. That our Lord and His Apostles professed to perform Miracles.

These epistles conclusively prove that at the time when they were written, St. Paul, and the churches to whom he wrote, considered that manifestations of supernatural power were frequently taking place among them. I fully concede that this does not by itself prove that the occurrences in question were supernatural. On such a point it is quite possible that the entire Church might have been labouring under a delusion; but they conclusively prove that both the apostle and those to whom he wrote firmly believed them to be such. They consist of two different classes of facts. First, direct miracles believed to have been wrought by Paul. Secondly, the presence of a large number of supernatural endowments, of which the individual members of the Church believed themselves to be in actual possession.

First, with respect to miracles wrought by St. Paul, it has been affirmed by several writers, that although many persons have alleged that miracles have been performed by others, yet it is impossible to find a writer of character who deliberately affirms that he has done so himself. This assertion has originated in an obvious oversight. St. Paul, in each of the epistles to the Roman, Corinthian, and Galatian churches, has deliberately asserted that he was in the habit of performing actions which both he and those to whom he wrote considered to be miraculous. Thus he writes to the Romans: "I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ." To the Corinthians he says as follows: "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you, in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." To the Galatians he uses the words, "He that worketh miracles among you." Here the context makes it plain that he means himself.

Nothing, therefore, can be clearer than that St. Paul has here asserted that he was in the habit of working miracles. These quotations prove the following points:—

- I. Within twenty-eight years after the crucifixion

St. Paul believed that he possessed the power of working miracles, and that he had done so through the entire course of his previous ministry; and the churches to whom he wrote concurred with him in this opinion.

2. This power of working miracles was supposed to be necessary as a vindication of a person's claim to the office of an apostle. Consequently, these assertions of St. Paul furnish an incidental proof that the other apostles claimed to be endowed with this power, and were believed by their converts to possess it.

3. Although St. Paul's opponents at Corinth denied that he was a true apostle, yet they did not venture to affirm that he had not performed actions which were apparently miraculous. This is clear from the fact that, unless they had esteemed them to be genuine miracles, the apostle in making these assertions would have laid himself open to the danger of immediate exposure.

4. As St. Paul believed that he had exercised these powers from the first commencement of his ministry, and that the other apostles had done so likewise, this carries up the belief in this supernatural power to the first origin of the Christian Church.

5. As it is inconceivable that the servant could have believed that he possessed a power of which his Master was destitute, it follows that both St. Paul and the churches must have believed that Jesus was

an habitual worker of miracles ; and that He Himself must have believed that He performed them.

6. The belief in the possession of this miraculous power was no gradual growth in the Church, in the form of myths or legends, but was coincident with the first propagation of Christianity.

I fully concede that neither of these six points, nor the whole of them together, afford an actual demonstration that these supposed miracles were real ones ; but I submit that they go a long way to establish their reality as firmly as any facts in history. As unbelievers do not deny that the moral utterances contained in the Gospels are in the main accurate reports of the teaching of Jesus, they clearly establish the lofty elevation of His character ; and as these epistles render us certain as to that of Paul, it is simply incredible that either of them should have lent himself to the perpetration of a fraud ; and it is little less so, that they should have been a prey to a state of mental hallucination which would have left them under a delusion as to whether the acts which they so frequently performed were or were not miraculous. But, further, if the supposed miracles involved instantaneous cures of blind, lame, paralytic, maimed, or leprous persons, such as the Gospels represent them to have been, delusion as to their reality was out of the question. I fully admit that St. Paul has nowhere in the Epistles stated the kind of miracle which he believed that he was in the habit of perform-

ing, nor of those which he and the Church attributed to Jesus. This can only be learned from the Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; but history will refuse to believe that the traditions of the Church have utterly failed to present us with at least a general idea of the kind of miracles which Jesus and His apostles professed to perform, even if we accept the dates which are assigned by unbelievers for the composition of the Gospels as the correct ones. It follows, therefore, that if neither Jesus nor St. Paul could have been deceived on this point, the miracles which they asserted that they performed must have been real ones.

IV. The existence of a number of Supernatural Manifestations in the Apostolic Church.

I now draw special attention to the supernatural endowments of which the different members of these churches believed that they were actually in possession, because their phenomena are so singular as to render it in the highest degree improbable that either Paul or the churches could have been labouring under a delusion respecting them.

These epistles afford the most conclusive proof that St. Paul and the various parties in these churches were firmly persuaded that a set of supernatural manifestations of a different order were taking place as the result of the operation of the Divine Spirit, wrought in testimony to the Resurrection of Jesus,

and for the purpose of firmly planting the Church among the communities of the world. From the manner in which these are referred to, it is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that they point to facts of some kind as habitually occurring among the members of these churches ; though this does not of itself prove that they were due to supernatural agency. As this subject is of great importance in this controversy, I have elsewhere treated it at considerable length. At present I must content myself with the briefest allusion to its most salient points.

Besides a number of incidental references to these supernatural endowments scattered throughout the whole of his writings, St. Paul has devoted to them, in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, three entire chapters, full of the most interesting and minute details. In the twelfth chapter he gives a list of them, which is repeated three times,—and which, if not intended to be exhaustive, was evidently intended to enumerate the chief ones. They are as follows: the gift of wisdom, of knowledge, of faith; gifts of healing, of working of miracles (*ἐνεργήματα δυνάμεων*), prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues, and of interpretation. The Epistle makes the following facts respecting them certain :—

1. They were believed to be supernatural endowments communicated by the Divine Spirit to various members of these churches.

2. They were in the most constant and habitual exercise.

3. Two of them only would in modern times be designated as a power of working miracles. The remainder superadded a number of mental endowments to the possessors.

4. So profound was the conviction of the different members of the Church that these gifts were a reality, that a deep spirit of emulation prevailed to possess the more important ones.

5. These gifts were supernatural endowments, qualifying their possessors for the discharge of particular functions in the Church, suited to the wants of the infant community.

6. They possessed this remarkable characteristic, that they were entirely distinct from each other in function; and that the possession of one of them by no means implied that of another; nor did the enlightenment conveyed by one convey any additional information on the subject-matter of another.

7. Just as it is with our natural faculties, the possession of a gift did not confer on the possessor the discretion to use it rightly. It was even capable of being abused for the purposes of ostentation.

8. Whatever these supernatural powers might have been, in certain cases they were capable of being called into exercise subject to the control of the will of the possessor; and the apostle lays down a number of regulations for the purpose of repressing their disorderly use, and rendering their exercise conducive to edification.

9. While deeply persuaded of the reality of these gifts, the apostle was fully sensible that they would not be permanently continued in the Church ; but that they were to fulfil a merely temporary purpose. When that purpose was realized, they were to be withdrawn. He even assigns them a very subordinate rank to a number of moral virtues.

10. These gifts, if real, constituted a body of endowments of which the early Church must have stood in urgent need ; and without the aid of which, humanly speaking, it was impossible that it could have succeeded in establishing itself as a permanent institution. Two of them would have enabled its despised missionaries to command the attention of indifferent or hostile audiences. Another conferred on them the requisite courage for pleading the cause of the New Religion in the midst of dangers. Three more furnished the requisite enlightenment as to its principles, and supplied the defects of the early training of the converts. Another furnished its possessor with a supernatural insight into character,—a qualification which must have been pre-eminently needful for those who were called on to exercise government or oversight in the Church. The function of the gift of tongues is doubtful ; but it seems to have been a power of raising the mind above its ordinary level, and giving utterance to its exalted feelings. That of interpretation was the expression of these utterances in the forms of ordinary thought.

Such are the chief facts which this epistle proves to have been accepted as actualities by St. Paul, and even by the parties in these churches in opposition to him. So far we are on firm ground. They prove both that the apostle, and those to whom he wrote, firmly believed in the presence of a very remarkable supernatural power in these churches, and one entirely different in character from the creations of current supernaturalism. As it has been objected that the whole was due to a spirit of fanatical enthusiasm, I draw your attention to the fact that the characteristics above referred to are such as are to be found in no system of miraculous belief which has been generated by enthusiasm. In the apostle's whole treatment of the subject we discern the presence of a highly discriminating judgment. These phenomena, the peculiarities of which are very imperfectly appreciated by ordinary readers, are such as fanaticism does not create. I allude especially to their separation of function, to their being subject to the control of the will of the possessor, to their liability to abuse, to their conferring no general infallibility, and to their being designed to subserve only a temporary purpose. I submit it, therefore, to your careful consideration, that the peculiarity of the phenomena in question, the existence of which these epistles positively establish, and the discriminating judgment which St. Paul exercised respecting them, go a long way to prove that they were facts, and not delusions of the imagination.

V. The existence of a new Spiritual and Moral Power in the Church.

To the belief in the presence of one more supernatural element in the Church, these epistles afford the most undeniable proof. The embracing of Christianity had been attended with a mighty moral renovation in the minds of the converts. This the apostle and his converts firmly believed to be due to the operation of supernatural causes. It is a certain fact that it was occasioned by the preaching of supernatural beliefs. The reality and the greatness of the effect that was produced is indisputable. Every part of the Epistles is full of allusions to it. "Ye have turned to God from idols," says the apostle, "to serve the living and true God." Addressing those who had been abandoned to a number of odious vices, he says, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." It is simply incontrovertible that these Christian converts from paganism had undergone a mighty moral transformation. I submit that the facts are utterly unable to be accounted for by the mere action of enthusiasm, fanaticism, or credulity.

VI. That within the briefest interval after the Crucifixion, the Resurrection of Jesus was accepted as a fact by the entire Church and by its individual Members.

These epistles furnish the most overwhelming proof that (when the apostle wrote them) the entire

Church, including its most Judaising sections, firmly believed in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, as the great fact on which its entire superstructure was erected; and that this belief was firmly entertained by those followers of Jesus who reconstructed the Church after the crucifixion; and that it was the only thing which rendered it possible. As it is impossible, within the space which can be devoted to a lecture, that I should cite the passages in these epistles which bear on this subject, I must content myself with a statement of the results which they prove, and a brief discussion of their evidential value.

1. They prove, beyond the power of contradiction, that St. Paul firmly believed that he had seen Jesus Christ risen from the dead. This, of course, by no means proves that what he saw was an objective reality; but whether it was so, or a delusion of the imagination, it is one of the most palpable facts of history that the conviction that he had done so metamorphosed his entire life, has effected the mightiest and most beneficent revolution in the history of Europe, and has exerted an influence on all the great civilized races of men, compared with which the deeds of its greatest statesmen and warriors, the creations of its greatest poets, and the works of its greatest writers are as nothing. Are the mighty results which are due to St. Paul's conversion owing to the hallucinations of an overheated brain? Are they based on an unreality? If they are so, the condition of human

nature is deplorable indeed; for in that case fanaticism, enthusiasm, and delusion were powerful to effect what the utmost efforts of enlightened reason have failed to accomplish. As a result such as this great delusion has accomplished (if it be one), is without a parallel in the history of man, and is utterly unaccountable by means of the known forces which act on human nature, it leaves us in the presence of a moral miracle.

It has often been objected against the validity of the apostle's testimony, that being a man of peculiar mental idiosyncrasies, he mistook a subjective impression for an objective fact. If I were at liberty to assume the truth of the narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, circumstances are there mentioned by the writer—such as the falling of scales from his eyes—which would render the truth of such a supposition impossible. But as these facts are not mentioned by the apostle, and as the truthfulness of the author of the Acts is denied, I cannot avail myself of them. We have, therefore, only St. Paul's full belief that what he saw was an objective fact, and that this was so powerful as to convert him from furious opposition into devoted love to Jesus, and to efforts to spread His Gospel, which a life of suffering was unable to shake, and which terminated only with his life. Let me here specially draw attention to the fact that the supposition that St. Paul was a prey to a delusion of the imagination, leaves the might with which it has

acted on the history of the world, and the beneficent results that have followed it, utterly unaccounted for. Why is it, I ask, that of all the delusions of which man has been the prey, this only has been attended with such mighty and beneficent results? It is not sufficient to say that St. Paul was the prey of a mental hallucination; but it is necessary to account for the effects which it has produced, otherwise we fail to grapple with the historical conditions of the case.

These epistles prove that in all ordinary matters, in things relating to his mission, and even in dealing with events which he himself esteemed to be supernatural, the apostle was a man of the soundest practical judgment. In estimating the value of his testimony, this latter point requires particularly to be attended to; and I confidently appeal to his mode of dealing with the supernatural gifts as a proof of it. He undoubtedly considered himself to be the subject of supernatural revelations; but several passages make it clear that he was in the habit of discriminating between these and the impressions of his own consciousness.

2. The belief in the resurrection of Jesus does not simply rest on St. Paul's testimony that he actually saw Him. It was the universal belief of the Church,—even of his opponents, who evidently had not derived their views of Christianity from his teaching.

3. It was not only believed in as a fact, but it was

the one sole and only ground of the existence of the Church as a community.

4. It was recognised as possessing a mighty moral and spiritual power, binding the individual Christian into the closest relation to Jesus, as his sovereign Lord, to whom he felt bound both to live and to die.

5. The testimony of these epistles not only is valid for the dates when they were written—viz., the brief interval of twenty-four, twenty-eight, and thirty-two years after the crucifixion respectively—but is equally so for that of every one of the primitive apostolic churches, including the mother-church of Jerusalem. This being so, they prove that it was coincident with the reconstruction of the Church immediately after the crucifixion, and was the sole foundation on which it rested.

6. If this belief was founded on a delusion, it must have been one which was embraced by a very large number of persons within the briefest interval of time, and have been one with which neither myth nor legend had anything to do in the formation.

7. These epistles furnish us with the names of several of the original followers of Jesus who believed that they had seen their risen Master on several different occasions—viz., Peter, the eleven apostles, James—then the entire apostolic body. This is not only affirmed by St. Paul in the face of his opponents as a truth which was incapable of being disputed; but the language of St. John in the

Apocalypse affords the most unquestionable confirmation of the fact. Also, when we compare together St. Paul's assertion in the Corinthians, that He was seen by James and Peter, with that in the Galatians, that he had a personal interview with those apostles, in which he discussed with them the essential principles of their common faith, the probability amounts to almost a certainty that he was told by Peter and James that they had seen the Lord.

8. The Epistle to the Corinthians also informs us that one appearance of the risen Jesus was believed to have been witnessed by upwards of five hundred of His followers, of whom more than one-half were alive when the apostle wrote the letter. This is a fact of which, if true, it is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance. In confirmation of its truth, I observe that it is impossible to believe that St. Paul asserted it, knowing it not to be a fact. Even if unbelievers go to the extravagant length of questioning the honesty of such a man, it is impossible to doubt his prudence. This alone would have withheld him from making such an assertion in the face of his enemies, unless he fully believed that they accepted this statement as a fact. His means of ascertaining the truth were ample ; and it is impossible to believe that a man of the mental endowments of St. Paul would have omitted to inquire into the beliefs of the primitive

believers on a point so vital as the resurrection of Jesus.

9. One further point these epistles put in a striking light. The resurrection of Jesus was accepted as a fact even by those who on general grounds explained away the truth of the literal teaching of Christianity as to its promise of a corporeal resurrection hereafter. Views of this kind were entertained by some portion of the Corinthian church. St. Paul's mode of reasoning with them is most remarkable. Its entire cogency depends on the assumption that they would admit the resurrection of Jesus to have been an objective fact. If they had entertained the smallest doubt on this, his argument would have been simply absurd. "If Christ be preached to you that He rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" The dullest intellect could not have failed to see that this argument was conclusively met by denying the resurrection of Christ. We may wonder that persons who believed in the resurrection of Jesus as a fact could have had any difficulties about a future resurrection. Yet so it was; and the mode in which the apostle reasons with them is an indisputable proof both of the universality and the strength of the conviction of the reality of His resurrection.

Such are the chief facts which the evidence supplied by these epistles puts beyond all reasonable doubt.

The Belief in the Resurrection of our Lord not due to the Delusions of His early Followers.

The question before us is now reduced into exceedingly narrow limits. Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, a personage whom the writings of the Old Testament had induced the Jews generally to expect. He was crucified on account of that claim. His crucifixion caused a temporary extinction of the hopes of His followers. His Messianic claims were revived on the persuasion of His followers that He had risen from the dead. The Church was reconstituted on this basis, and has ever since exerted the mightiest influence on the foremost portions of the family of man.

These things being so, there are only two possible alternatives before us. Either the resurrection of Jesus was a fact; or it was founded on a delusion of some kind: for I assume that no one whose opinion on the point is of the smallest value will venture to affirm that it originated in a deliberate imposture. If the latter of these two alternatives be adopted, the delusion must have taken one out of two forms, which are the only possible ones. Either the followers of Jesus thought that they saw Him when in fact what they saw was nothing but the creation of their imaginations; or Jesus did not really die, but they mistook a recovery from the wounds which He received in crucifixion for a resurrection. Other alternatives there are none.

The last of these hypotheses seems to me to be so hopelessly absurd, that it is hardly possible to argue against it with gravity. No depths of credulity on the part of the followers of Jesus are sufficient to render such an hypothesis a possible one. What the Church stood in urgent need of was not a man slowly recovering from his wounds, but a Messiah capable of realizing her aspirations. It was impossible to mistake a sick Jesus hiding Himself in obscurity for that Messiah. If the idea of the resurrection originated in this way, it must have been the conscious imposture on the part of Jesus, His followers, or both. But this will not be pretended; for it is impossible that the religion of truth can have originated in a conscious fraud. To suppose, as the true solution of the historical problem before us, that a Jesus slowly recovering from His wounds, who was secretly conveyed away, and who henceforth hid Himself in retirement, and died shortly afterwards, was actually a Christ raised from the dead, who could realize the hopes of His followers, will be accepted only by those who secretly believe that human nature is a sham: Jesus was either visited by His disciples, or He was not. If they visited Him, they had the evidence of their senses that what was before them was a weak and dying man. If they agreed together to reconstruct the Church on the basis of His supposed resurrection, it must have been a fraud deliberately concocted. If He was secretly removed into some

distant place of security, and this retirement of His was the foundation of the delusion that He had risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, this must have been well known to those through whose agency it must have been effected. Did Jesus lend Himself to this scheme? How long did it take to persuade His other followers that He had gone up into heaven, without affording them a sight of Him, and on this to found the idea of His spiritual Messiahship? In considering this subject, it must never be forgotten that while such a belief was very slowly growing, the Church was perishing from the want of a Messiah at its head to unite together its discordant elements. Besides, the idea that Jesus had escaped with His life is one which never struck the early Jewish adversaries of the Christian Church. It has originated only in the closet of modern speculators.

The Vision Theory considered.

The other hypothesis may be designated as the "vision theory." It is founded on the assumption that one or more of the followers of Jesus mistook some subjective impression that they had seen Him alive after His crucifixion for an objective reality; and under this delusion they persuaded the others to believe in its reality. This hypothesis, in order that it may bear the appearance of possibility, is under the necessity of assuming that the followers of Jesus were the prey of an amount of enthusiasm and

credulity that knows no limits. As it will be impossible for me to discuss all the various forms under which this hypothesis may be presented, within the space allotted to this lecture, I must content myself with offering a few observations on its general character.

While this hypothesis frees the followers of Jesus from the charge of deliberate imposture, it represents that that which has been the most benevolent of human institutions, and has produced the greatest amount of self-sacrifice, has originated in a baseless delusion. Those who retain any faith in humanity will only accept this as a solution of the facts before us, except under pure inability to do otherwise. The Person and work of Jesus—not a bare doctrine—has imparted to this society its moral and spiritual power. That power has been centred, not in a mere fond admiration for departed worth, which has passed into everlasting unconsciousness, but in a Jesus still alive, who possesses every perfection of human nature, able to be the subject of the profoundest regards of His followers, and prompt them to make a self-sacrifice for Him similar to that which He has shown for them. Can it be a fact that the self-sacrificing regards of those who during the course of eighteen centuries, in numbers which no man can number, (Blessed be God for the fact!) have viewed Him as the centre of their moral and spiritual life, and who have striven to surrender themselves to Him as living sacrifices—a reasonable

service—Can it be true, I ask, that all this has been rendered to one who sleepeth, and cannot be awakened? No other religion, or moral system, or great institution, is based on devotion to a living person.

Those who propound this theory as a solution of the origin of the delusion of the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, would gladly assume that it originated in the enthusiasm of a single individual, and that he or she communicated his or her enthusiasm to the other disciples. The reason of this is obvious. It is a far more plausible assumption that a single person should have fancied that he saw Jesus alive after His crucifixion, and persuaded others that he had done so, than that many persons should have at the same time been the prey of similar delusions. But the assumption that He was seen by one person only is in the most direct and palpable contradiction to facts which I have proved to rest on the most unquestionable historical evidence. Not one person, but many, were firmly convinced that they had seen Him alive after His crucifixion. This is the true problem which history presents to us for solution; and we must not allow our attention to be diverted from it by any mere theory destitute of an historical foundation.

Still, however, it will not be out of place to offer one or two remarks on it. Let it be observed that this is not the mere case of a person's mistaking a subjective impression for an external reality, such

as occur under certain states of disturbance of our mental powers, which are designated "spectral illusions." It involves the persuasion that a man who had been crucified only a few days before—not his ghost, or a spectre—thus reappeared, and was mistaken for the friend actually returned to life. Nay, more: conversations devoid of all objective reality must have been held; appointments have been made for future meetings; messages must have been sent; resolutions formed; and many other things, which it is impossible here to enumerate, must have passed between them. These engagements were kept, or they were not. If they were not, then there would have been an end of the delusion. If they were, it is necessary to assume a succession of such visionary delusions. But is it credible, I ask, that an enthusiastic follower of Jesus, who was persuaded that he saw Him again alive in bodily reality, should have made no attempt to embrace or touch Him during these repeated meetings? If he had done so, the delusion must have burst at once.

But further: it must have taken a long time before the other followers could have been induced to accept this story as a fact, and to set themselves to reconstitute the Church on its basis. They could not help asking, Was He not going to appear to them? What about His Messianic claims? Was He going to revive them on the old foundation? How was the Church to be reconstructed on the basis of a Messiah

who had been crucified, but who had been raised from the dead? Would He appear at their head? These and numerous other questions must have been asked; and until they were answered, the acceptance of the story was impossible. Under such circumstances, the process of making converts—if possible—must have been a very slow and painful one. A considerable interval of time must have been absolutely necessary to have effected it; for such delusions are only possible when the realities of the present have become dimmed by the haziness of the distant past. The required interval of time is precisely the thing which the stern conditions of history refuse to grant.

But to return to the theory which historical evidence proves to be the only possible one, as an adequate solution of the facts. Not one person, but many,—St. Paul says, more than five hundred at once,—several of whom can be named, were firmly persuaded that they had seen Jesus alive after His crucifixion, on different occasions. It follows, therefore, that if they mistook creations of their imaginations for objective facts, considerable numbers of persons must have laboured under the hallucination of fancying that they saw visions of the crucified Jesus risen from the dead, and have mistaken them for realities. This, and no other, is the true problem which the highest form of historical evidence presents for our solution, as the only alternative to the resurrection of Jesus being an objective fact.

I need not point out in detail—for the subject is one level to the most ordinary understanding—the numerous and insuperable objections to which such a theory is exposed. What! Several different persons, and on different occasions, five hundred on one occasion, and eleven on several others, imagining that they saw visions of Jesus alive after His crucifixion, and fancying that what they saw was not His Spirit, but Himself raised from the dead? that they saw these visions both when collected in bodies, and separately as individuals? that they communed with Him, received from Him definite and satisfactory answers, made appointments to meet Him, and finally, that they proceeded to reconstruct the Church on the basis of a spiritual Messiah, who was to reign in heaven, instead of a temporal one, who was to reign on earth? Nay, not only was this mass of delusion possible, but it has acted on the mind of man with a power and influence for good, such as no truth has succeeded in effecting! I appeal from the bar of prejudice and prepossessions, to that of reason and of fact. If this theory is a true account of the historic facts, these constitute a greater miracle than the resurrection itself!

But I earnestly draw your attention to the following consideration. Even if this theory is capable of giving a possible account of the historic facts, for which it is hopelessly inadequate, it leaves the moral and spiritual fact utterly unaccounted for : namely, why it is that of all the delusions of which man has been the prey, this

alone has acted with a power and influence for good to which history presents nothing in the smallest degree parallel? I submit that any theory which creates this problem is no solution of the facts as they are presented to us by history.

Conclusion.

It follows, therefore, that as both these alternatives utterly fail as solutions of the historical facts, besides being in themselves hopelessly improbable, the only remaining alternative, which is attested by the highest form of historical testimony, must be the true one,—that Jesus rose from the dead. This also furnishes an adequate and philosophical account of all the facts of the case. The belief in the resurrection has altered the course of the world's history. It has created the mightiest of human societies. It has imparted to it a moral and spiritual life, which has been energetic for eighteen centuries in improving the condition of man, morally, religiously, socially, and individually. If the Messiahship of Jesus was real, and His resurrection a fact, it is clear that it involves the presence of a Power adequate for the production of the results. But if both these are fictions, we are in the presence of a result which is destitute of a natural cause, or in other words, of a moral miracle.

The reality of the resurrection being established, the difficulty of accepting the Gospels as credible narratives of facts ceases. That difficulty never would

have arisen, except from the narratives of supernatural events that they record. Apart from this, all the other critical objections taken together would not hinder their acceptance as memoirs of the ministry of Jesus Christ, derived from the reminiscences of His personal followers, handed down by the continuous traditions of different churches, and committed to writing within that period when those traditions must have preserved the utmost freshness. This is what they profess to be ; and the truth of the resurrection being established, and thereby all *a priori* difficulties being removed, we can accept their statements on the same amount of evidence as we require for the ordinary facts of history and of daily life. The miracles themselves become the ordinary facts of such a life. In a similar manner also the supernatural occurrences which St. Paul refers to in his epistles become equally credible.

The question before me has been a large one, and one which requires a far more elaborate treatment than has been possible within the limits of a single lecture. Those who are desirous of seeing the whole argument more fully developed, I must refer to my recent work. I submit, however, to your consideration, that these reasonings are fully adequate to prove to any unbiassed mind, on the strongest grounds of historical evidence, that the supernatural and miraculous elements which are contained in the New Testament are facts, and not the creations of a disordered imagination, nor founded on imposture.

One further observation, and I have finished. Too much stress has certainly been laid by the defenders of Christianity on the performance of objective miracles, as though they formed the one sole proof of a supernatural revelation. I am far from underestimating them, as the foregoing lecture shows, as proofs of our Lord's divine mission. But I am most anxious that we should place them in their proper position as constituting only a portion of this proof. If the fourth Gospel is an authentic document of Christianity, our Lord affirmed that He had a higher evidence than that of objective miracles in His entire work and Divine Person. "He that seeth me," says He, "seeth Him that sent me." "If ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may see and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him." Our Lord's entire moral and spiritual manifestation, according to these and numerous other statements in the Gospels, form the highest evidence that He came from God. His entire Person, work, and spiritual influence form the great standing miracle of Christianity, the evidential value of which the lapse of time is powerless to diminish. To this the history of the world presents no parallel. It can be assigned to no human cause. The Light of the World shines by its own inherent illuminating power. When men's spiritual blindness is such that they fail to perceive it, then, and then only, should we appeal to mere objective miracles. We must be careful even how we appeal to these apart from their

moral environment. This the miracles of Christ possess. They are not simply prodigies, but "His works,"—"the works which His Father gave Him to finish." I apprehend therefore, that, in conformity with the statements of the fourth Gospel, the order in which our evidence ought to be placed is, first, Christ's Person and divine work ; after that, His miracles. This view of the case, though not in express terms asserted in the Synoptic Gospels, may be abundantly confirmed by their contents. The evidence of miracles was far more commanding to those who witnessed them, than it can be to us in these latter ages, who have to believe in them on historical evidence. But we, after a lapse of eighteen centuries, are far more capable of appreciating the mightiness of the work of Jesus Christ than His contemporaries, or even than the early ages of Christianity. This evidence will grow stronger and stronger as time advances, until the Father puts all things in subjection under His feet. First, then, I place Christ, His Person, work, and mighty influence, originating in His resurrection from the dead ; then His miracles, with their moral environment, as proofs that He has come from God.

*THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE
REQUIREMENTS OF HUMAN SOCIETY.*

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*THE ADAPTATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO
THE REQUIREMENTS OF HUMAN SOCIETY.*

I PROPOSE to confine myself rigidly to that aspect of the moral power of Christianity, which is described in the announced title of this lecture. The power of the Gospel to develop the individual capacities of man will be dwelt upon in the next Lecture; its power to answer some of the deeper questions of human life is to be dealt with in the last one (p. 221). I have to speak simply of its bearing on human Society as Society,—both on the bonds which keep it together, and on the principles which give it a living unity, manifesting itself in corporate feeling and action. The subject, even thus limited, is formidably large; and it is one, moreover, which has occupied men's thoughts for ages. I can hope only to sketch it in mere outline; nor can I promise any great novelty of treatment, except so far as new lights may be thrown on an old subject by the needs, the questions, and the experiences of our own days. The one point which I would desire to establish, is the almost immeasurable difference between a religious conception of the

unity of man, based on the consciousness of a God revealed and known to us, and those conceptions which either ignore or deny Him. These last can but form themselves, even at the best, into an uncen-tered and shadowy "Divine Republic"; the religious conception builds up before us "a city which has foundations," a well-centered and well-compacted "kingdom of God."

This relation of Christianity to human society should be examined by reference, first to the abstract principles of Christianity itself, and next to the practical application of these principles in Christian teaching and life.

I. To one who enters on the ground of abstract enquiry, two questions at once present themselves. What is it which human society needs for its existence and well-being? What is there to correspond to these needs in the fundamental truths of the Gospel?

The essential needs of human society follow from the very nature of its composition. Society is made up of a number of men, each of whom has his own perfect individuality; able to stand—in some points bound to stand—absolutely alone, face to face with himself and with God; yet these individual units are necessarily bound together by a network of real spiritual ties, so that they not only must inevitably influence one another through outward word and action, but are, in their own internal nature, swayed by common influences, which vary in power according to the

degree of unity of nature existing among them. On the right balance of these two principles of Individualism and Socialism, the well-being of society depends. This balance is most difficult to secure in fact, and even adequately to determine in theory. One or other of its scales is always being depressed below the true theoretical equilibrium. At times the sword of physical force, wielded in the cause of anarchy or of tyranny, is thrown in to end the conflict. But this violent interposition, if ever salutary, is salutary only as a daring act of spiritual surgery, performed on the body politic at some crisis of disease. For the normal healthy well-being of society, the two principles must be recognised, and must partly be harmonised by formal regulation, and partly left to harmonise themselves by their own free action.

Now for individuality Society needs freedom,—freedom of individual action within assigned limits, and freedom of corporate change and development. For unity Society needs stability—some permanence of basis and of main principles, anterior to, and independent of, the wills of the individuals composing it. Without the first there is no social life; without the second, social life has no continuity. The perfection of human society we call “civilisation”; the very derivation of the word shows the necessity that all should act as *cives*—free citizens of one country, each asserting his freedom, and yet asserting it in order to lay it as an offering, if need be as a sacrifice, on the altar of unity.

Now what has the Gospel to declare in connection with these two fundamental needs?—or, in other words, what does it reveal as the true principles of all social life?

Christianity is, no doubt, first a revelation of the purest and most perfect Monotheism. In this respect it has simply taken up and perfected the sublime message of the older covenant: "The Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul, and all thy mind." Its peculiarity is that, in doing so, it speaks of the will of God, not only as an external law, but as a spiritual principle, realising itself within the soul. "Our life is hid in God." "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." The will of God, as law, is expressed on the tables of stone, written by the finger of God in the silence of the Mount. The attributes of God, as the basis of all spiritual morality, are represented as "written on the fleshy tables of the heart." To be like God is the ideal of humanity. Clearly, therefore, Christianity recognises to the full truth, which, if once accepted, gives what the stability of society requires—a basis wholly anterior to the wills of the individuals composing it.

It may well be contended that, even without any distinct faith in a personal God, all thoughtful observation of humanity, whether under the vivid concentrated light of our own inner consciousness, or in the vaguer and larger field of human history, must reveal

the existence of some such basis. We talk of the reality of "laws" of society. Whatever be meant by that unhappily ambiguous word "law," we at any rate recognise by it some power constraining our own individual wills, and we can hardly accept as a satisfactory genesis of such a power the mere consent of a number of other human wills, however great. We are driven to seek it in some "Law of Nature"—of the whole universe, it may be, material and immaterial—or of humanity as such, in its spiritual independence; and, with different degrees of clearness, we ascribe to such law a "Divine right." As a matter of fact, many atheistic or pantheistic theorists have been the determined advocates of despotism, and, in wrath against individual self-assertion, have been ready to "bid order reign" over a spiritual desolation, misnamed peace.

But still for the mass of men there can be no doubt, either theoretically or historically, that in Monotheism, in the recognition of an almighty, all-wise, all-righteous personal God, the element of stability in society is most firmly and practically secured. The command to the troubled waves of individual energy, "Thus far shall ye come, and no farther," must be spoken by a Personal Will. The attraction which is to create one great tide, overcoming all the eddies and surges of the sea of life, must come from a Heaven above. Perhaps a bare absolute Monotheism is apt to emphasize too sternly this one element of social life, even to the exclusion of the other. It is probably by

no accident, for example, that the religion of Islam seems to have thrown its ægis over absolute despotism. In the Judaism from which it mainly sprang, this tendency was kept in check by the division of consecrated power. "The Lord's anointed" was not only the king, but the prophet also, and the priest. When in Solomon the three characters were but partially united, the result was a heavy yoke. When One should come, who could wear on His brows, with unquestioned right, the threefold crown of the kingdom, the priesthood, and the prophethood, then this sovereignty was recognised as one too great for any mere man to wield. But in the bare, awful Monotheism of Mohammed these counteracting influences are swept away. As the individual will itself is lost in the Kismet of absolute predestination, so its actual exercise is overborne by the majesty of the successor of the Prophet. The idea of Monotheism is "God over man." As man becomes conscious of his own littleness, blindness, weakness, sin, the conception of God as a Father is apt to pass, largely if not absolutely, into the more awful conception of Him as the Lawgiver and the Judge; and, in relation to human society, the *Vox Dei* is sought, not so much in the direct revelation to each soul, as in the voice of the "powers that be" as "ordained by God." The right to question its utterance fades out of view. It may therefore be true (as has been concluded by many) that a bare Monotheism, especially when it holds

predestination with absolute unlimited conviction, secures stability at the expense of liberty. And whenever this is done, life must die out from the fabric of society, and leave it standing in a dead, imposing magnificence, destined to fall crashing to the ground whenever a blast comes from the turbulent ocean of revolution. If any systems of Christianity have so represented it, they have given some colour of reason to those who denounce religion in the interests of freedom.

But Christianity is not a bare Monotheism. Its essence lies in the revelation of "God in man." By that revelation the reality of the Divine Image in man, on which his power of freedom depends, is reasserted, against all discoveries of his weakness, even against the humbling consciousness of his sin, and the chill terror which tells of the coming of death. The true sense of the Fatherhood of God is revived and renewed. The consciousness of a Holy Spirit, animating and sustaining, and yet not enslaving, our spirits, is brought out into vivid universal clearness. The very mystery of the Gospel—the Incarnation and the Atonement of Christ—asserts with the most startling emphasis the truth which St. Paul thought so fundamentally Christian, but which some modern thinkers* have denied to Christianity, that man must be a "fellow-worker with God" in the triumph of good over evil. Nor does it leave that truth on the cold heights of abstrac-

* See, for example, Mill's "Essays on Religion," Essay iii. p. 256.

tion,—it brings it down to the busy scenes of actual life. Now it assumes it as a thing of course, and only draws inferences from it; now it states it for the crises of life in all the impressiveness of paradox. The Apostles are not afraid even to contrast the liberty of the new covenant with the bondage of the old—glorying in the free individuality of the Spirit, as distinct from the constrained unity of the Law.

It is in this element of Christianity that we find the security for individual freedom. It cannot be doubted that it has destroyed slavery, whether embodied, as in Europe, in the old serfship, or, as in America, in the later forms of domestic slavery. It was significant that the Scriptural defenders of slavery always drew their weapons mainly from the armoury of Judaism. It is equally significant that the New Testament does not think it needful or safe to denounce slavery: it simply enunciates the principles which must eventually destroy it, and leaves them to work themselves out. Nor can we well fail to trace to Christianity much of the assertion of individual freedom of thought, belief, or action, against either the tyranny of law or the subtler tyranny of public opinion. It was this aspect of Christianity which perplexed and angered the enlightened despotism of a Trajan or a Marcus Aurelius. Every martyr was, often unconsciously, a martyr for liberty. Against the claims of absolute power, even if, as afterwards, usurped in the name of Christ Himself, the answer has constantly gone

forth, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you, more than unto God, judge ye," and act as ye shall judge. "As for us, we cannot but speak." There is a law of free conviction, higher than any law of human power. Again, the very reverence for weakness, so characteristic of Christianity, in which its chivalry differs from mere heroism, whatever else it implies, is surely a recognition of the inviolable sacredness of the human soul as such. Similarly the plea for faith—the faith which must necessarily be individual—warns off the foot of man from the spiritual soil over which only the Presence of God should move. In our own country, at least, it is historically true that the overthrow of absolute power was wrought in the name of religious faith, even more than of political liberty. A Christianity, which has no reverence for freedom, is a Christianity untrue to one of its most fundamental truths.

I contend, therefore, that Christianity vindicates its claim to be a religion for human society, by recognition, not of one, but of both of the elements, by which the fabric of society is maintained. It does not, indeed, attempt to harmonize them in any definite formula. When our Lord gave the memorable answer to the question as to the tribute-money, He did not, as His hearers probably desired, separate by a hard and fast line the things which may be given to Cæsar from the things which must be denied him in the name of God. His silence here was a

part, and an important part, of His teaching. From time to time, no doubt, the voice of Christianity must speak, to mediate or to decide, in the contests between authority and freedom. But its application of the principles of the Gospel is for the time only: the principles, and these alone, are eternal. The Gospel itself is content to recognise both Individualism and Socialism, as necessarily co-existent, and to assert the sacredness of both, as a part of the law of Nature, which is the law of God. Hence it is that it has a suitability to all phases and stages of society—to the immobility of the East, and the restlessness of the West—to the early times when society had hardly emerged from the simple form of the family, and to the complicated developments of our maturer civilisation. If it is ever supposed to be an advocate for either principle alone, it must be because only one element of its full perfection is set forth. In a non-Christian society of modern days, the first and most obvious loss is the loss of stability. But in the inevitable Nemesis which waits on anarchy, freedom also will be swept away. There are not wanting signs in the anti-Christian systems of our day of devotion to a mere enlightened despotism as a remedy against license, or to a rigid socialism, in which individuality is proscribed. The time may come again, when Christianity shall be invoked as the protector, not of order, but of individual freedom.

So much the consideration of first principles seem

to teach us as to the peculiar appropriateness of Christianity to human society. I may remark here, in passing, how singular a testimony to the supernatural character of Christianity is afforded by its solution of the great social problem, which undoubtedly baffled and perplexed the greatest thinkers of antiquity. That by any ordinary process of development, conceptions so eminently philosophic in their character should have arisen in a comparatively unphilosophic race, and principles absolutely catholic in their applicability to all races and times should have been the offspring of the notorious Jewish exclusiveness, is to my mind incomprehensible—a miracle more difficult of acceptance than any which can be presented to our faith. Grant the great fact of the Incarnation, and the result follows, by an inference which the simplest could learn, or at least be taught, to draw. Deny it, and it would be difficult indeed to give any adequate explanation of the Apostolic teaching, or of its result in the Christian Church.

II. But I leave the consideration of the abstract principles of the Gospel, and pass on to what perhaps may be considered the real point at issue between Christianity and unbelief on this subject—the practical application of these first principles in what we call especially Christian morality.

Before doing this I would remind you of two preliminary considerations.

The first is, that, since Christianity is based on certain

great truths or facts, expressing the relation of God to man, its creed is not, and cannot be, a code of rules, an order of rites, a system of philosophical theories. It is simply a declaration of certain facts, in or anterior to the history of the world. As a teaching of Monotheism, it declares that God made all things in heaven and earth, and that He is the Father of men, made in His own image. As properly Christianity, it declares that the Son of God took upon Him our flesh, in it lived, died, rose again for us, and ascended to sit for ever on the right hand of God—that the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father, sent by the Son, actually works in the souls of His people, to inspire, to teach, to sanctify. Of these great truths Christianity presents two witnesses—the Bible and the Church—that is, the written Word and the embodied grace of Christ. Yet it is not properly the Bible, or the Church, or both, but the great truths of which these bear witness, which form the ultimate basis of Christianity.

Now these so-called truths may be falsehoods; the witnesses to them may be deceived or deceiving. But it is clear that, if they are truths at all, they must be unchangeable in themselves, and imperishable in their effects on man. Rules and rites may change, as circumstances alter; theories may last only for a time, as being necessarily imperfect exhibitions of principles. But what has been has been. Its effects must live, and adapt their power to every change,

be it what it may, which passes on man. And truths of fact, moreover, are the property (so to speak) of all. Their effects, if they are real, must touch, not a few souls here and there, but the whole race of man.

Of these effects some are wholly independent of man. They belong to the working of the laws of God; all that each man can do is partially to cut himself off from them, or open his soul to them. But so far as these consequences suggest and demand the co-operation of men, they become the great principles of Christian morality. They are always principles, not formal rules. They must, of course, embody and enforce themselves in definite rules of action. But these outward rules—be they ever so Divine—will necessarily change and pass away. They are but the mortal letter: they who would imprison the growing spiritual life of man within them make them “the letter that killeth” by the very contact of its mortality. Even of the Ten Commandments our Lord taught us this in the Sermon on the Mount. And when, later in His ministry, He was asked, “Which is the great commandment?” He gave no formal rule. His answer asserted two fundamental principles, and implied a third. The love of self He took for granted; the love of our neighbour He emphasized; and above both He exalted the love of God.

And this leads me naturally to my second preliminary consideration, that (as Hooker puts it) the “law supernatural” implies and supplements the

“law natural.” It accepts the fundamental principles of human nature, as it came from the hand of God : its task is partly to supplement those principles as imperfect, partly to regenerate and purify them, as existing in a fallen nature. Hence, so far as the principles of Christian morality are embodied in rules, these rules take for granted what man previously knew ; they supply (so to speak) the dominant note, always implying certain under-tones of harmony, although sometimes needing for a time to be brought out in great and even excessive clearness. The “New Testament morality”—that is, the portion recorded to us in Holy Scripture of the distinct and formal moral teaching of our Lord and His Apostles—cannot be taken to express the whole of the moral life which He intended to grow up in His Church. Just as it implied the old Jewish law and ritual in all who first preached the Gospel, so, to His Divine mind perfectly, to the Apostles, and especially to St. Paul, in degree, it implied all that the same God had taught the Gentiles.* It laid hold of the three great threads of the actual civilisation of man at the appointed time when He appeared—the knowledge of the Greek, the law and order of the Roman, as well as the holiness of the Jew. It moulded and regenerated all ; it ignored and entirely superseded none.

* Students of Church history will remember how emphatically this view was advanced by Clement of Alexandria and other great writers of the Alexandrine school.

Suffer me to illustrate these two principles by notable examples.

On the first, let me remind you of the error of those who would guide all Christian society literally and absolutely by the formal commands of our Lord to His disciples, especially those of His earliest and most rudimentary teaching in the Sermon on the Mount; who, if such an attempt seem to fail in our own time, either teach us by implication that His wisdom was imperfect, and His religion a thing of yesterday, or brand the Christianity of our own day as a mere civilised and softened heathenism, apostate from Him whose name it bears.* We can well understand the inclination to make His words eternal in their letter as well as their spirit, when even an unbeliever in His Divine nature has suggested that we can best translate abstract morality into the concrete by considering, in any case actually presented to us, how Christ would have us think and speak and act.†

* I refer not merely to such works as "The Life of Joshua Davidson" and "Modern Christianity a Civilised Heathenism." Even in Mill's Essay on Liberty (in the section on "Liberty of Thought and Discussion") the same line of thought prevails; and Christians who cannot accept it are accused of considering "the doctrines in their integrity" as merely "serviceable to pelt adversaries with."

† See "Mill's Essays on Religion," p. 255. "Nor even now would it be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract to the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." The confession is a remarkable one, and it seems difficult to find a

But still it cannot be. A rule, to be living and effective, must adapt itself to the special needs of the times and the men to whom it is given. When these pass away, the form of the rule must change with them; the inner life in it "fulfils itself in many ways." The rules, for example, so often discussed in anti-Christian controversy—of non-resistance to evil, of unbounded and unquestioning almsgiving, of absolute surrender of the wealth of the world and all that it will buy—these simply embody the great principle of complete self-sacrifice for love to man or love to God. At the time of their utterance they called for a literal obedience: first from the Apostles, and afterwards from the church of Pentecost they received such obedience. So, and so perhaps only, could a note be struck, which, by a simple massive unison, should startle a sleeping world as with a trumpet sound. But it is the principle alone which is eternal. Its application, then absolute, had to be tempered hereafter, not, indeed, by any regard to self—for this would have contradicted the leading principle—but by regard to the good of the offender and the good of society. The same love, which first dictated these rules, might afterwards equally forbid their literal exercise. When

sufficient basis for it in the belief that the Prophet of Nazareth is to be placed "in the very first rank of men of sublime genius" (p. 254). Mr. Mill himself evidently, as a "rational sceptic," inclines to a higher view, though one infinitely below what Christianity implies.

Carlo Borromeo embraced, entreated, rewarded, one who had sought to be his assassin, he erred, though in a noble error; he had a right to sacrifice his own indignation, but he did no real kindness to the criminal, and he would have done, had not the law intervened, a cruel unkindness to society.*

In regard to the second, I would suggest to you to consider the opposite treatment in the New Testament of what we may call the two self-regarding virtues, purity and manliness. Purity is emphasized again and again; it is rekindled by the sacred fire of holiness from the altar of God; the violation of it is branded as a sacrilegious pollution of the Christ in us. Manliness is scarcely noticed; once only in the New Testament are Christians bidden to "quit them like men, and be strong;" and even of the strength that is in them "to overcome," they are rather reminded that it is an "unction" from above, a "strength made perfect in weakness." Can we fail to understand this difference? Read the story of the unutterable impurity of the age, unrestrained by the enlightenment of Greece and the stern order of Rome, hardly affected even by the greater purity of the Jewish life, because it imprisoned itself in a ceremonial cleanness and a sanctimonious pride. You will not wonder that Christian purity came as in a

* I have quoted an historical example. Many of my readers may remember a similar picture in the region of fiction, from the hand of the author of "*Les Misérables*."

new commandment, with an angelic presence which needed to be heralded in letters of light. Read, on the other hand, the moral teaching of the age. You will find that "manliness" (which I take to be rightful self-assertion) was then exaggerated to an idolatry. The one type of heathen virtue was the Stoic self-sufficiency; the one type of Jewish piety was the Pharisaic self-righteousness. Can you wonder that in the first proclamation of Gospel morality the opposite class of virtue had to be emphasized, and the overweening self-assertive element of human nature to be rebuked or restrained rather than sanctioned? And yet, in the Christian Church, manliness grew quickly up, under the consecration of far higher and lovelier principles, till, through the heroism of the martyr, and the self-control of the ascetic, it issued finally in the form of that chivalry which carried courage to an excess, even a fantastic excess, such as Greece and Rome never knew.

You may see another application of the same principle, if you consider the treatment of the two great relative principles of duty and love. Both, doubtless, are accepted and blessed. "To be true in love" is the Christian motto, as it is the character of "the Head" "into whom we are to grow up." But who can be blind to the predominant, the almost overwhelming, advocacy of the claims of love? Do we ask why this was so? The answer is surely to be sought in the fact that duty, especially public duty,

was the watchword of all the higher morality of man, as it then existed on the earth. It lingered even in the corruption of the Roman Empire; it flourished in the idolatry of the Law, which was at once the strength and the weakness of the Jewish nationality. But love seemed to the heathen moralist to be an unmanageable factor in the "Divine Republic" of the soul, to be coerced and reduced almost to the level of an appetite; so that his philosophical nomenclature had no word for it, which did not savour either of personal limitation (*φιλα*) or of half-sensual passion (*ἐρως*). Love among the Jews was limited and narrowed by the question, "Who is my neighbour?" till it became a kind of extended selfishness, excessive towards all within the pale, fierce or pitiless towards those without. The principle of Love as a world-wide principle needed to be rescued from oblivion, almost to be created anew. Therefore it was exalted, not only rising above duty, but at times almost seeming to overbear duty. But the perpetuation of that sole exaltation of Love, then absolutely needful, has been urged, not quite unjustly, against the prevalent Christian teaching of our own changed day.

Taking, then, these two guiding considerations with us, let us consider how Christianity does actually deal with human society.

It seems to me that Christianity cannot accept as a fundamental basis, or carry out as a dominant principle of action, the conception of human society

as founded simply on the consciousness of mutual needs. For this theory regards society as if it had no basis of natural unity, as if, in sustaining it, men had simply to regard their own interests, exercise their own will, and leave all to come right by a competition of such interests, in which the race must be always to the swift, and the battle to the strong. This is, I suppose, the creed of the Political Economist pure and simple; it is the application of the wider principle of the "struggle for existence," which is supposed to rule in the animal world. Now it is the effort of even the highest humanity to correct this selfish principle by nobler and more spiritual elements. The very fact that the word "selfish" is discredited in our ordinary language is decisive as to its power so to correct it. And a morality stamped with the sign of the cross, and professing to follow "the mind which was in Christ Jesus," is self-condemned, if for a moment it neglect that corrective duty.

But, while this is obviously true, it is equally clear that neither reason nor Christianity condemns utterly this principle of self-love and self-assertion in its own true, but subordinate, sphere. It is too often forgotten that our Lord's golden rule takes the love of self for granted. In urging that the love of our neighbour should be "like it," He clearly means that it should be like it in kind, though it may well surpass it in degree. Therefore, as this love of our neighbour is at once a social instinct and a moral

principle of thoughtful action, our Lord obviously sanctions self-love, not merely as an instinct to be allowed for, but as a principle to be recognised among the guiding principles in life. Nor is this all. It has even been made a reproach to Christianity, by the advocates of the "Religion of Humanity," that it appeals to the sense of our own highest interest, in bidding a man work out his own salvation, and save his own soul. The reproach would be just, if the Gospel made this man's chief duty; it has been just against many theories of the Christian faith, many forms of the so-called religious life. But it is no reproach, it is rather an evidence of truth to human nature, when this self-love is placed in its due position, as the third, and the third only, of the great moral laws of life.

Accordingly, the general tenour of Christian morality, as such, is at once to acknowledge this rightful power of individualism, and to keep it in its due subordination. Its acknowledgment of the right of property, which the tenth commandment manifestly sanctions, and which was urged by St. Peter on Ananias, even in the first ardour of self-sacrifice in the early Church, is surely decisive. St. Paul's declaration, that "if a man will not work, neither shall he eat," is enough to satisfy the sternest preacher of self-reliance. It is perfectly true that we hold property to be a trust from God, to be used for His glory and man's good. But, in so doing, we necessarily

recognise its rightful existence between man and man as a law of nature. Its acquisition depends on the great law of natural inequality; its transmission on the different degrees of natural unity between man and man. Socialism, which ignores both these laws, can only press Christianity into its service by taking what is accidental and temporary in its system for what is essential and eternal. The Gospel unquestionably recognises the power of self-interest—and therefore of self-defence, self-assertion, and the like—as one of the forces which must move the world.

But still, following here also the example of its Master, the Christian morality rather takes this force for granted, as one which requires little fostering, and which in human nature, as it is, is likely rather to need depression than exaltation. Its quarrel with the political economist begins when his principles are asserted, as if they could cover the whole field of human nature, or meet all the exigencies of human life. Social affections (as Butler showed long ago), are at least as original and as powerful an element in human nature as self-love. The trials and distresses of life often arise from causes beyond the control of those who suffer from them; and they must be met by other influences than those of a rigid individualism. Accordingly Christianity, from the Apostolic times downwards, has always thrown much of its strength into the work of the limitation of self-love. At times, as when our

Lord laid His special command of voluntary poverty on the young ruler—as when, in the Church of Pentecost, individual property was laid at the Apostles' feet—as when, in the Middle Ages, ascetic examples of utter self-abnegation bore their heroic witness against a world of selfish violence—it even finds it needful to overbear self-love entirely for the moment. At all times it holds up the glory of self-sacrifice, for individuals, for mankind, for God Himself, as that which sinful man needs to have enforced upon him, and that which, if man were not sinful, would be naturally recognised as the sovereign principle of life. Yet, putting exceptional occasions aside, it never denies the action of self-interest. Even the hard lore of political economy has its place, if it will be content with that place, under the supremacy of the Gospel.

Closely connected with this subject, though leading us to a distinct field of thought, is the relation of Christianity to what is called material civilisation,—to the provision of the necessities, the comforts, the adornments, the enjoyments of life. What is its principle here? It is the absolute subordination, in the self which it has recognised, of the flesh to the spirit, the mortal to the immortal. It asks, as to all these external things, “What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” It undoubtedly urges that a man should be able to sit loose to these things; and, that he may be able to do so in times of crisis, it bids him

exercise a habit of self-control, and, if necessary, self-discipline or self-chastisement, as a part of regular Christian life. But the method of the application of this principle must vary, according to time and place, circumstance and character, from the most severe asceticism to the free and thankful use of all good things. The poverty of the Galilee of our Lord's time was very different from the poverty of St. Giles's in our own. What was spiritual help in the one case might be spiritual hindrance in the other. In these days, indeed, the anxieties of a pinching and oppressive poverty may be at least as injurious as the effeminating effects of luxury. For in either case men rest too much on "the things that perish in the using," and so have no sufficient spiritual leisure for the things which abide for ever. The ideal, both of the individual life, and of the life of society, is to be free for the things of the spirit, and to have the lower capacities so far satisfied as to conduce to the cultivation of the higher. How this shall best be realised, is a problem, the elements of which vary from time to time. In our own age, too apt to glory in material advancement as if it were true civilisation, too prone (especially in England) to the accumulation of wealth which may be spent in luxury, Christian morality can hardly be wrong in lending all its force to the plea which all thoughtful philanthropy must make, partly for greater simplicity of our external life, and still more for more thorough

culture of the higher forces, which will keep the influences of that external life in their right place of subordination. But still, it is, as a rule, temperance, not abstinence, that it would preach. Abstinence is but the medicine of spiritual disease; temperance is the regimen of spiritual health. No one who studies the picture of our Lord's own life, or even the caricatures of it, presented by the cavillers of His own day, or the "idyllic" painters of ours,—no one who enters into the central principle of the Gospel, as exalting the spirit above the law, and therefore trusting in positive rather than negative influences,—will doubt that the relation of Christianity to material civilisation is one of independence, and not of hostility.

But I pass on from this selfish aspect of our social relation, which Christianity recognises, but hardly enforces, to the view of society as dependent on the nature of man, and therefore having a sacredness of its own, on which Christianity undoubtedly rejoices to dwell. The unity or brotherhood of all men is one of its fundamental truths. That this unity may be strengthened, and, if need be, enforced, by mutual needs, no man can deny; that it is expressed in the reality of mutual affections, we freely acknowledge. But it is (so the Gospel declares) based on neither of these things. God has made men of one blood, children of one Father. Unity, as truly as individuality, is a law of nature, that is, of God.

Now the first form of this natural unity is clearly the unity of the family—between father and son, between brother and brother, between husband and wife. No one can be ignorant how essentially sacred Christianity makes this unity, which to Utopian dreams of socialism is apt to be a perplexity or an offence. With marvellous profoundness of treatment St. Paul (in the Epistle to the Ephesians) sees in its two great bonds shadows of Divine relationship to man. Fatherhood is sacred because we have all one Father in heaven. Marriage is consecrated, as a type of the mystic union between Christ and His Church. Steadily, even sternly, both the Gospel, and the Church proclaiming that Gospel, stand forth to bar the way against profligacy, against liberty, falsely so called, against pleas of public or private convenience, and the like, when they seek to violate the sanctity of the home. There have been times, indeed, in the history of Christianity, when it has faltered in the proclamation of that sanctity, overborne by a supposed call of devotion to God, or of that devotion to humanity, which Socialism now-a-days pleads against what it calls domestic narrowness. But these times of failure have been exceptional and transient. Its teaching, on a whole, has been powerful beyond all human power to preserve this, the first, and yet the most enduring, of all forms of human society.

Next in order comes the form of political

unity, growing out of the family into the tribe, out of the tribe into the nation. That this is a real natural unity, few will doubt. How much of it is to be assigned to the power of race, how much to the influence of circumstances, physical and moral, acting through generations, may be subject of controversy. But its reality is independent of these questions. The marked and vivid form in which it exists in modern Europe, has grown up since the days of the first proclamation of Christianity. There was then but one vigorous nationality, under the levelling sway of the Roman Empire ; and this nationality, the Jewish, was alien from the Gospel, and the foe of its catholicity, and moreover was already marked for death. But still political unity is distinctly consecrated in the New Testament. Probably it recognises not principally what we call patriotism and public spirit, which have flourished in more ancient and more modern times ; it deals rather with loyalty to "the powers that be, as ordained of God," even when Christian loyalty had to be paid to a pagan emperor, and that emperor a Nero. This could not be otherwise in the actual political condition of the time ; and long after that time patient submission, rather than enthusiastic service, was all that Christians could pay to an idolatrous and oppressive power. Not till freedom and independence came back, did what we call patriotism revive. Then it went back largely to the older Testa-

ment, the covenant of the chosen nation; and in so doing, it sometimes forgot the difference which separates Judaism from Christianity.* Still the fact remains, that Christianity distinctly consecrates political unity, even under the pale and dreary grandeur of the Roman Empire. We may well argue *à fortiori* for its sanction of the nobler and intenser national unity of later days.

Then, beyond the family and the nation, there is the unity of the race of man. How little this was recognised in uncivilised days, when "stranger" and "enemy" were synonymous terms; how hard the pride of civilised man found and still finds it to believe that there is no difference between "Greek and barbarian, bond and free"; how patriotism, especially in the pre-Christian ages, was apt to become an enmity to the human race at large, and to dispense with the simplest laws of truth and justice in dealing with foreigners; how in our days physiological science is tempted to place impassable barriers between the Caucasian race and the Bosjesman or the savage of Terra del Fuego—all this we know only too well. Slavery was the practical representation of this denial of human unity. Gradually, indeed,

* This is notable, for example, at the time in English history when, in the reign of Elisabeth, patriotism and loyalty were exaggerated almost to an idolatry. The English were "God's chosen people"; their enemies (the Spaniards especially) were as Canaanites or Amalekites.

the idea of human unity emerged ; it wrote itself on the language of men ; it dawned on the philosophers of Greece and the jurists of Rome. The universal spread of Greek philosophy and of Roman law was the pioneer of the catholicity of the Church of Christ.

But yet it is not too much to say that Christianity, which has been content to give its powerful sanction to the unity of the family or the nation, has here simply transformed into a warm living reality what was before a ghostly abstraction. The miracle of Pentecost was the visible sign of this regeneration of the world. So far as our "common humanity" is a power, and not a name, it exists through the power of the Gospel. Commerce, which is the expression of the unity of mutual needs, not only fails to enforce it, but sins against it again and again. Philanthropy, on a purely human basis of brotherhood, has never yet proved itself a world-wide power. Christianity, and as yet Christianity almost alone, has proved itself the messenger of universal brotherhood to man. The words "Our Father" and "Our Saviour" have had a power which the "enthusiasm of humanity" could never rival.

And yet, as if all these forms of natural unity were not enough, we know that men are always forming voluntary unions, from harmony of character or from unity of object. Each makes these for himself ; and yet, when made, they bind him who made them. In lower degree this is true of all such voluntary asso-

ciations. How specially true of that voluntary union of marriage, which is the link between these voluntary bonds and the bonds of natural unity ! It rests with us to accept or refuse it ; yet, when it is formed, all earthly ties give way to it. "A man shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife."

Now all these forms of unity Christianity recognises. But one form of unity it creates in the Catholic Church, marvellously, in its first origin, uniting both kinds of unity. Like the marriage which is made its type, it was a voluntary unity under the free conviction and self-devotion of faith ; and yet, once made, it asserted itself as supreme. Unlike that marriage tie, if once offered to man, it cannot without spiritual responsibility be refused. It is through the creation of the Church that the unity of all men starts into a living reality. All men are, or may be, its members. All "peoples, nations, and languages" find their place within its pale. It is a unity which is based upon the essentially spiritual principles of a regenerate human nature. Therefore it goes deeper than those which depend on circumstances or secondary principles. Therefore its power has been wider than any unity of family, of nation, of race. And yet it is infinitely freer and more elastic than any,—less liable even to deadness, incapable of death.

It is obvious from all these considerations how Christianity enforces unity in all these various forms. I do not, of course, say that in the history of this sinful

and imperfect world there has been no clashing of these various principles of unity, in which one crosses and mars the others. But take the history of the world broadly, and Christianity has been the chief social and uniting force—compared with which all others have been as nothing.

Its great principles of social action are expressed in the famous formula already referred to (*Ἀληθεύειν ἐν ἀγάπῃ*). Now of these two principles I would remark that the principle of truth (or righteousness) strongly recognises individuality; the principle of love, without ignoring it, depresses it to a secondary place. In the conception of “being true,” there is, first, the love for and the search for truth, in which each man, though he may receive the aid of others, is ultimately alone. For each man must think, each man must believe, for himself. There is, next, the speaking truth, and acting righteousness; and this, while it necessarily is a social act, impossible without contact with others, still recognises ourselves as distinct from them, them as distinct from us. We call its operation “duty,”—the giving to all what is due from us to them, whether we care for them or not, whether they are friends, strangers, or enemies; and in conceiving what that duty is, we are always alone with our conscience or before God. The merely righteous man is isolated, even in the crowd whom he serves, and who serve him. On the other hand, the essential point of the principle of love is self-forgetfulness. By it we live in the life

of others ; our hearts (we say) are "bound up with theirs," whether in personal affection to individuals, or in collective love to the race. Our individuality remains ; else how could we love ? Yet it is for the time forgotten. Love may even become an idolatry, in which all self-respect, all conscience, all truth, are lost.

All societies must be held together by both these bonds. The one gives solidity, the other enthusiasm, to social life. Yet in different societies the proportion of the combination of these two principles varies. In the family, for example, there may be more of love ; in the State, more of duty. Christianity, as I have already said, at its first proclamation strongly emphasized love. In its continual preaching, I suppose that love must still predominate, especially in the form of mercy to a suffering and a sinful world. But the degree of that predominance will vary : there may be times when truth has to assert itself against love ; there will be no time in which truth can be ignored or forgotten. If it be, then Christianity will deserve the reproach of effeminacy, sentimentality, and unnaturalness, sometimes urged against it now. But if truth be duly preserved and honoured, I do not think we need fear to emphasize love. The power of self, as it will defend self-interest, so also will preserve the greater individuality which belongs to righteousness.

If it be asked, How can Christianity reconcile the

principle of individualism which it accepts, and the principle of unity which it glorifies ? the answer brings us back to the first principles with which we began. The unity which best preserves individuality is the one which does not bind men directly together, but unites them indirectly through a unity with God, in which each is still individual, while all are united to the one Centre. Such is the unity represented in the type of the One Body, in which the New Testament delights. The foot is one with the hand, not because they are linked directly together, but because each is united to the life of the one heart, and guided by the thought of the one head. The fundamental conception of the Church of Christ is the recognition of a real spiritual tie between each soul in God, manifested in the Incarnation, knit afresh, where sin had weakened it, in the Atonement. In fact, it is the Mediation of Christ, in all its length and breadth, which makes that tie a reality. We are not left on the great plain of earth, with the heaven of a bare Monotheism immeasurably above us, up to which we may look for the revelation of God's will to guide our course, and from which there come down the showers of His beneficence, the thunders of His righteous wrath. We see a track of light left by the Ascension of Christ ; and the rays of that light are as the cords of unity, down which God's grace thrills to each soul, up which shoots the reflex current of that soul's love, and by which the soul itself is gradually being

drawn onward and upward to the heaven where it has its own recognised place.

This conception of a spiritual unity, "hidden with Christ in God," belongs, no doubt, emphatically and properly, to the Church of Christ. Nevertheless, it has its secondary applications under all forms of society. When once the tie to God is recognised, all else follows. In no other way, so far as the world has yet seen, can the sacredness of the individual life be guarded from the encroachments of society, and yet society kept safe from the disrupting power of mere individualism.

It is true—we confess it with shame—that by the weakness, the errors, the sins of us Christians, this social power of Christianity is often weakened, sometimes paralysed, sometimes even perverted. But we ask, first, that the true ideal of Christianity be regarded, and that the Gospel's prophecies of its own slow and interrupted progress be not forgotten. Next, even as Christianity is, we ask that it be compared with all other systems of social life, whether such as have been realised in days past, or even such as float now over our heads, in the cloud-land of mere theory. We do not fear lest it should fail under either test. We compare societies where Christianity reigns even with an imperfect power, with those in which it is ignored, and in which men are wandering on bewildered in the search for a new gospel. We ask in vain, if Christianity be rejected, for any power

adequate to take its place. The deification of the *Universum*, the *cultus* of humanity, simply efface all individuality. Yet even these are better than the mere societies of expediency—the “limited liability companies” political and social—which mere individualism has to offer. We understand, as we look on the dreary prospect, the irreverent and yet significant confession, “If there be no God, it would be needful to invent one.” In the search for God, we come back to the one true Teacher, with the words, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” “For this is the life eternal, to know the true God, and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent.”

I commend to your thoughts this slight outline of a great subject. Of one thing I would remind you in conclusion—that the questions of human society are very prominent questions in our own day. The reign of extreme Individualism, in thought, in politics, in religion, is certainly over. The power of Socialism in all its forms, legitimate and illegitimate, is probably on the rise. The theories of the day which aim at a total reconstitution of society find that Christianity stands in their way; and they hope to attack it mainly through the weak points left by ignorance, by delusion, or by perversion, of its social power. They must be met not by a blind instinct, however healthy, of Conservatism, but by a thoughtful examination of what Christianity now is in its relation to society, and a determination that what it ought to be, that

(God willing) it shall be. The evidence of Christianity, here as elsewhere, which will tell most, is not the exhibition of its original credentials,—needful as the repetition of such exhibition is,—but the manifestation of its beneficent power. The common sense of man will answer then, if perplexed by speculative difficulties, “Whether it can be proved to be of God,” by this or that metaphysical proof of yours, “I know not.” “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind” without it, “now I see”—see my way, as through the struggles of individual life, so also through the intricacies and contradictions of society—see my way through this world, and lose it not even in the darkness which separates this world from the world to come.

*THE EVIDENCE TO CHRISTIANITY ARISING
FROM ITS ADAPTATION TO ALL THE
DEEPER WANTS OF THE HUMAN HEART.*

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*THE EVIDENCE TO CHRISTIANITY ARISING
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THE subject of Lecture which has fallen to my share in the present series is a very practical one. It is not a learned subject, requiring the aids of classical and other ancient erudition to handle it. All the deeper needs of the human heart can be learned well enough from our own consciousness and experience. In order to know them, we have only to know ourselves. It would be easy, indeed, to gather illustrations of them from all the religions of the world, both ancient and modern; for all popular religions have proceeded more or less upon the moral and religious needs of the race, and have sought, with more or less success, to meet and satisfy them. And all the literatures of the world, both ancient and modern, might easily be laid under contribution to the same end; for all poetry of the highest and truest kind is a mirror of the human heart, and loves to interpret its deepest meanings, aspirations, and cravings. But what need to go in quest of such far-fetched informations upon a

subject which lies close to our hands? Let us simply ask our own hearts, and they will tell us what they most deeply need—what they most yearningly crave.

Nor is the use of any formulated theology necessary in order to show the manifold and full adaptation of Christianity to meet and satisfy all the heart's profoundest needs. This adaptation lies patent upon the very surface of the New Testament; it comes home to the sense and feeling of the least theological of believers; and it is best and most humanly as well as most divinely expressed in the words, so full of grace and truth, of the Bible itself. It is, besides, the constant and most useful work of the pulpit to expound this adaptation, and to apply it practically in detail. It is the less necessary or desirable, therefore, that I should offer any doctrinal exposition of the subject on the present occasion,—such as might recall to your thoughts the manner of pulpit treatment. My proper business now and here is neither theological exposition nor homiletical appeal, but evidential statement—an argumentative treatment of the subject, in defence and confirmation of the Christian faith.

I. Let me begin by laying down this first proposition—That if Christianity can be shown to be perfectly adapted to all the deeper needs of the human heart, it follows that, as a practical religion, it is absolutely perfect.

“All the deeper needs of the human heart” are its moral and religious needs. The deepest thing in our nature is Conscience—*i.e.*, the sense of righteousness as the law of human life, and the sense of God as the righteous Ordainer, Upholder, and Vindicator of that law of righteousness; and the deepest relation of the human heart is its relation to God as the Author of our being, and the ultimate Ground upon which it rests. Among our profoundest needs, therefore, must be those which are connected with the conscience and this fundamental relation of our nature—our needs towards God and the law of Righteousness—the deep-going and far-reaching wants which crave that our relations to Him, which have been unsettled, deranged, and put out of harmony by the entrance of sin into our being and life, should be re-settled, re-adjusted, re-harmonized.

Distinguishing between religious needs which are felt and realized by all men, and others which come to be felt only after deep reflection upon human nature, and are never realized by more than a few of the finer and more deep-insighted spirits of the race—such, *e.g.*, as our need of an incarnation of the invisible God for all the purposes of fervent love to Him and intimate union and communion with Him, heart to heart and spirit to spirit; and confining ourselves at present exclusively to the former class of wants, let us, first of all, glance at the deepest needs of conscience.

The conscience is an inner law of righteousness for

man—a law written on his heart—in virtue of which, even without any accession of revealed law, he is, in so far as he obeys it, a law unto himself. But this natural indwelling light of law is very far indeed from conveying to us a full and adequate knowledge of righteousness, either as it is in God or as it ought to be in man. This law written on the heart is dimly written, at best ; the writing has become blurred and blotted, and in part illegible. This earliest revelation of righteousness is now utterly inadequate to express to us the whole will of God and the whole duty of man. The deepest need of conscience, therefore, is the revelation of a law of righteousness higher, more perfect, and more authoritative than its own. The earnest craving and cry of the heart, when it comes to the right feeling of its own want in this respect, is, “Shew me *Thy* ways, O Lord ; teach me *Thy* paths. O send out *Thy* light and *Thy* truth : let them teach me and lead me.”

Another profound need of the conscience in all hearts is the need of peace with God. It is deeply possessed and pervaded by the sense of sin and guilt before God ; this ever-bleeding wound, this ever-festering sore, has need to be healed ; and nothing can heal it but the experienced mercy and the gracious forgiveness of Him who is the Lord of conscience. Is the pardon of sin possible with the God of righteousness ? And if so, must not a righteous God pardon it in a righteous way—by a channel and

under conditions which shall conserve the unchangeable demands of righteousness, as righteousness dwells in the All-Holy and All-Just One? If our own hearts condemn us, God, we are sensible, is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things; and He, the Holy One, must much more condemn us than we condemn ourselves. How, then, is His condemnation to be turned away? How is God's peace to be obtained? Such are the needs and the problems of the sin-stricken conscience: "Wherewithal shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high God? Shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression—the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet, oblivious antidote,
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?"

Another of the deepest needs of the human heart is a full and adequate object of love, surpassing ideal excellence and glory any which is to be found in this imperfect world. The heart means not only conscience, but love; and if conscience is its deepest

meaning, love is a meaning of it which is inferior in depth only to conscience. And what is love's need, but that it should have right objects to love and be loved by,—good, better, best—high, higher, highest,—the best and the highest, most of all? But in this world, though our love may find the good and the better to love, the high and the higher, it fails to find the best and the highest. It has its own ideals of best and highest, but finds it impossible to realize them in all that the world contains of good and fair and noble; and this failure means disappointment—an aching sense that “all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Can these ideals of the heart,—ideal love to be loved and rested in with entire assurance and complacency—ideal good and happiness to be possessed, with a sense of having found the true riches at last—a heavenly treasure, even on earth, that fadeth not—an inheritance of blessing, even in time, that fadeth not away,—can these heart-ideals never and nowhere be realized? or are they not all to be realized in the objects of religious faith, and in the sphere of religious life and experience? “O that I had wings like a dove,” sighed out the Psalmist, “that I might fly away and be at rest! My soul thirsteth for God, the living God! O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee, in this dry and thirsty land where no water is.”

I shall only specify one more deep need of the human heart, in the sphere of moral and religious life.

Such a life is a life of high and arduous duty. It calls incessantly for effort and conflict, for self-denial and self-sacrifice in the service both of God and man ; and all this demands a large expenditure of moral force and energy. But one of the most conspicuous characteristics of the heart of man is its *feebleness* in the undertaking, and still more in the persistent doing, of such high service and work. A deep reader and interpreter of human nature—St. Paul—describes men in one place as at once *ασθενεις* and *ασεβεις*, without strength and without godliness : without strength to live a godly life ; and without a hold on God to obtain the needed strength.

Such, then, is the fourfold deepest need of the human heart : God's light, to lead us into a truer and more assured conception both of righteousness and sin—God's peace and reconciliation, to restore us to right relations to Himself and to His will—God's love, to dower the heart with plenary joy and hope, and a sense of overflowing fulness and sufficiency—and God's strength passing into our weakness, to fortify us in duty, to uphold us in conflict with evil, and to assure us final victory in the battle of a good and godly life. A religion which can adapt itself to all these moral and spiritual needs of the heart—in the sense of recognising them, meeting them, supplying them all to the full, and leaving nothing wanting to constitute itself the light and the peace and the joy and the strength and the hope of all human existence

in life and in death,—such a religion, it is plain, must as a practical religion be absolutely perfect.

II. Our second proposition is that Christianity can be shown to have a perfect adaptation to these and all other needs of our moral and religious nature and condition.

Let me observe that the earliest and still the best-loved name of Christianity—the Gospel of Jesus Christ—was significant of this its intensely practical character. It was “good news” for the world—something new and unheard of before for the world’s good—to meet its wants, to heal its wounds, to cure its evils, to fill it with the surprise of a new joy. It was first published as the Gospel of the Kingdom of God—of the Kingdom of Heaven. The God of heaven was again to dwell among men, and to reign in them and over them with such a kingly fulness of blessing and power, that the broken intercourse of earth and heaven would be felt to be restored, and man’s life on earth enriched and blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

This gospel was characterized by St. Paul as “the glorious gospel of the blessed God”—Himself ever blessed—and given by Him to bless mankind with a baptism of His own blessedness. And does not this appear with a glorious fulness in the very names and titles which are everywhere given to the God of the gospel in the New Testament? What revelations do

These names and titles publish to the world of His character, dispositions, and relations to mankind? "Our Father in Heaven"; "the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort"; "the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift"; "the God of peace"; "the God of hope"; "the God of all grace"—"able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think"—"able to make us perfect in every good work to do His will, and working in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight." What treasures for the human heart and life, what precious pearls of new peace, new hope, new trust, new joy in God, lie embedded in all these gracious names and self-revelations of the God with whom we have to do! It is the same with the numerous names and titles and styles of the Lord Jesus Christ, which are scattered broadcast, like diamonds, over the whole surface of the New Testament: not one of them an empty name, but every one expressive of some part of His fulness of practical grace and blessing; not one of them a barren style or title, but all of them suggestive of His rich and inexhaustible fruitfulness of use and benefit to the moral and spiritual life of mankind. His birth-name—*Jesus*—singled Him out from all men as the Saviour of the world—of all its benefactors the greatest and the best. His baptismal name—"The Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world"—sealed Him for the great oblation and sacrifice of the cross, and announced Him as the world's Propitiation and Peace

—the world's Atoner and Atonement both in one. And what a profound significance of full adaptation to all the spiritual needs of the race was conveyed in the marvellous threefold title which He assumed when, calmly, and in complete self-knowledge and self-possession, He said to His disciples in the upper chamber, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me."

But there is one favourite phrase of His apostles, which more than any other expresses the near relation of His Divine abundance to our human want. They love to speak of the *fulness* of Christ, and of our fullness or completeness in Him. St. John exclaims, with admiration, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and out of His fullness have we all received, even grace for grace." And the oft-recurring witness of St. Paul is the same: "It pleased the Father that in Him all fulness should dwell. . . And having made peace by the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. . . And ye are *complete*—filled full in Him who is the head of all principality and power." Could any language more perfectly express the practical sufficiency of Christ and Christianity for all the moral and religious needs of the human heart and life?—for giving us all the light we need, and all the nearness to God, and all the interest in the love of God, and all the strength in God? Cannot every true Christian say of what he finds laid to his hand in Christ and Christianity, "I

have all things, and abound ; I am full ; my God supplies all my need, according to His riches by Christ Jesus"—"Christ is made unto me of God wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption"?

No wonder St. Paul, having such a gospel to bring to Rome, could say in anticipation of his bringing it, "I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the *fulness* of the blessing of the gospel of Christ"—and no wonder that, in the assurance of carrying to the world's metropolis such a *pleroma* of moral and spiritual blessing, he exclaimed, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are in Rome also ; I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"! And every Christian man re-echoes the glowing language of St. Paul. "The gospel has been the power of God to save me. I am a new man in Christ. Old things have passed away from me ; all things have become new in me. Once in darkness, I am now light in Christ. Once an alien from God, I am now near to Him by the reconciliation and atonement of Christ's cross—the child and the heir of His everlasting love. Once in utter impotency for good, I am now strong in the strength and power of the Holy Ghost, shed on me abundantly through Jesus Christ my Saviour."

Here then we have the very perfection and *optimism* of a practical religion—to which absolutely nothing of

all we need is wanting, and to which it is impossible even in imagination to add anything which our moral and spiritual necessities require. It is simply in this practical character that we are at present examining Christianity and putting it to the proof; and from this examination it comes forth undeniably the most perfect religion that can be conceived. We do not claim for it to be equally perfect in an intellectual or speculative point of view. We do not claim for it to have given us a doctrine of God and His world-government which is plenary enough to have cleared up all difficulties and put an end to all mysteries. Christianity itself puts forward no such claim in its own sacred documents. "Here," says her greatest apostle, "we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." What can be more frank and candid? Dogmatically taken, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not perfect for the purposes of speculative knowledge,—although, even in this aspect of doctrine, it is perfect for all the purposes of practice and life. Christ is the Truth to us co-extensively with His being to us the Way and the Life. Absolutely nothing is wanting in Him as the Truth, which is needful to our having the full, and even the abounding use and benefit of Him as our Way into the Father's love, and our Life in the Father's fellowship, obedience, and service.

III. Advancing now to the question of the evidential value and force of this optimism of Christianity as a practical religion, my third proposition is, that there is no antecedent incredibility or even improbability that a religion of such a character should have been the gift of God to the human race.

Of course I can only argue such a question upon the principles of Theism—upon the assumption of God's Being and Goodness, as the Creator and Governor of the world. I cannot argue it with the atheist, who denies a God, or (which virtually comes to the same thing) denies that there is any adequate proof of His existence. And as little can I argue it with the pantheist, who denies God's Personality, and therein virtually denies that God stands in any such relation to man as that of a Giver of gifts. When the Christian advocate has to deal with atheism and pantheism, he must go much further back in the direction of first principles, in order to find any common ground upon which he may plant his leverage. But as yet the number of atheists and pantheists among our countrymen is not nearly equal to the number of our Deists, although it is no doubt increasing; and it is sometimes necessary to leave out of view the smaller class of unbelievers, in order to address ourselves to the more numerous class.

To proceed, then, with my argument on this understanding, I assume, in common with every Theist, that God not only is, but that He is the Father of lights.

from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. This conception of Him is one which is felt by every God-believing mind to be eminently worthy of Him. If God were not the Father of lights, but the opposite; if He were not the Giver of all good and perfect gifts, but the reverse; such a Being could only be a Demon to us—he could not be a God. Well, then! is there anything antecedently incredible in the idea that such a God as we believe in—such a Father of lights, such a Giver of good and perfect gifts—should have been Himself the Giver of such a Light and of such a perfect Gift as we have seen Christ and Christianity to be? A religion perfectly adapted to all the needs of man's heart and life,—a perfect law of life, and a perfect dower of life,—would such a gift of God have been less worthy of Him to give than any of the other gifts which He has already bestowed upon us? There is a graduation in the values of His natural gifts: “Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?”—and if we can conceive of gifts of God that would exceed in value all bodily endowments and supplies, is there anything incredible, or inconsistent with our worthiest conceptions of Him, in the idea that the gifts of Jesus Christ to the world might very well be the gifts of the Father of Lights Himself? But we may well go further than this, and ask, Is there anything even improbable in the idea that such a religion as we have seen the gospel of Jesus

Christ to be should be the gift of God to us? We cannot for a moment think so, if only we are more in earnest in our faith in the Fatherhood of God than the old heathen were, who called Olympian Jove the Father of men as well as of gods—Father Zeus—and who spoke of themselves correspondingly as God's offspring. How deeply in earnest is Christ with this faith in the Heavenly Father! and how admirably, how irresistibly does He argue from it! "If ye who are evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?" How infinitely much is included in that "*how much more*," I need not say; I leave it to yourselves to say it in your hearts. He reasons from the past and present to the future, when He stands upon the strong ground of the Heavenly Father's love; and He reasons to the future of God's gifts as confidently in reference to moral and religious gifts as in reference to the gifts of food and raiment. He varies His words so as to extend His reasoning to both sets of gifts alike. In one place the wording is, "How much more will He give 'good things'?"—a phrase of blessed fulness including all that is good for body and soul. In another parallel place the wording is, "How much more will He give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"—a phrase specially applicable to the gift of Christ's religion itself. His reasoning, which is of admirable force and beauty, coming home to

every heart, teaches us how divinely much of good was always to be expected from the Heavenly Father, the Father of lights ; how much was to be expected of coming blessing at the very moment when He so deeply interpreted and so touchingly uttered the Father's inmost heart and purpose. His reasoning made it more than probable—it made it morally certain—that when the Father's own time came, which He had reserved in His own power, He who had already given to His human family so much of the good and the better, would go on to give them the best of all—His Crowning Gift—the Gift of the Holy Spirit Himself, the Lord and Giver of the Divine life, the life everlasting.

But this probability, for the purposes of Christian evidence, requires, of course, to be turned into positive proof ; and this proof—for the ends of intellectual, or purely logical conviction—may be found in certain considerations external to the intrinsic characteristics of the religion itself, when brought into connection with these characteristics.

IV. That it is impossible to give any adequate explanation of the origin of Christianity upon mere natural principles, or to include it, along with all other phenomena of the world's history, in the succession and concatenation of natural cause and effect.

Authentic Christianity lies before you in its own standard documents of the New Testament canon ;

and by an inspection of these, in comparison with other ancient literature, you can judge for yourselves whether it is a religion derived from other sources, or one of a thoroughly original and independent character. That the New Testament derives much matter from the Old, is of course a patent fact ; but this fact has no relevancy to the present question, because the two Testaments together make up one and the same religion—they are both included in the Christian Scriptures.

But does the New Testament borrow anything either from the Oriental religions and theosophies, or from the philosophical schools of Greece and Alexandria? It could not have failed to do so if it had had a purely natural origin ; for these were the only available sources of the age from which borrowed religious thought could be obtained. But neither in matter nor in form is the presence of any of the elements of these religions or philosophies to be detected in the writings of the evangelists and apostles. The entire substance and flavour of the New Testament is intensely different ; and the whole of the most characteristic teaching of Christ and the apostles was so far from being in the spirit and manner of these older systems of thought, that we have the highest contemporary authority for maintaining that it was intensely offensive to their adherents. "We preach Christ crucified," says St. Paul ; "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

If Christianity had been of the world, the world would have loved its own. It was because it was not of the world—either the Oriental, or Hellenic, or Judaic—that the world hated it.

You have not only Christianity before you in the New Testament, but you have the Christ Himself, in all the traits of His personal character, and in the whole train and succession of His personal history.

Was there ever a teacher, was there ever a character in the world less derived from others, less dependent upon others, less given to borrowing from others, less needing to borrow from others, than He? If there is anywhere in all history an original religious Genius, and a Character standing alone and isolated in the world, in solitary greatness, is it not He? As much as this is now universally acknowledged by infidels themselves. Even Mr. Mill acknowledges, in his posthumous "Essays on Religion," that "the Prophet of Nazareth has His place in the very first rank of the men of sublime genius of whom our species can boast." How, then, are we to account, on natural principles, for an originality of religious teaching and life, which is without a parallel in universal history? Never man spake of God and men like this Man; never man loved God and men like this Man; never man lived for God and men like this Man. How could all this come to pass in this one historical Personage, unless there had been something more than natural in His Person and conditions?—unless He had been as unlike

all other human beings in some of His conditions and relations as He was unlike them in godly life and godly speech? And what was the perplexed and questioning wonder which He awakened in so many of those who were best acquainted with all the circumstances and surroundings of His life in Nazareth, but a dim and unexpressed surmise that there was something more than human about Him—something supernatural, miraculous, Divine? And can it ever be proved that that surmise was not a just one? In a case where it is found impossible to account for the phenomenon before us in a natural way, what remains, in reason and in common sense, but to conclude that the phenomenon was more than natural? to see in it the finger of God—a direct manifestation of the Divine in the human?

But, better than anything said about Him by other men, let us hear what He said about Himself.

V. Our fifth proposition is, that we have the plainest and fullest assurances from the lips of Christ Himself, of the Divine source and authority of His teaching,—that His teaching was not only true teaching, but the Truth of God—God-given, and God-sealed.

I limit myself to a single instance of this self-witness of Christ. You remember that when Jesus on one occasion went up into the Temple and taught, the Jews marvelled, as well they might—saying, “How

knoweth this man letters, having never learned ?' Jesus answered them and said, " My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God or whether I speak of myself. He that speaketh of himself, seeketh his own glory ; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not ; but I know him, for I am from him, and he hath sent me." What claim, I ask, to a Divine commission could have been more outspoken ? What challenge of a Divine source and authority for His teaching could have been more explicit ? The alternative is unavoidable : either we must receive His testimony to this effect, or else allege that He was either deceived Himself, or a deceiver of others. And is either of these allegations by any possibility tenable, when we look at them in the light of that perfection or optimism which we have discerned in the religion which He gave to the world ?

The allegation that He was Himself deceived in regard to His Divine mission and authority, is one that affects very deeply His intellectual power and competency, and introduces into the question of His mental endowment and action and production an element of insoluble difficulty, and, indeed, of the most hopeless contrariety or contradiction. His religion, as we have seen, is full of the highest and most worthy

conceptions of the Divine nature and attributes ; and no less so of the deepest insight into the moral constitution and capacities and needs of humanity. His knowledge both of God and man, and of their mutual moral relations, was immensely greater than that of any other religious teacher that ever appeared upon earth ; and His teaching on these highest and deepest subjects of human thought was always of that intensely luminous kind which is self-evidencing and self-commending—seen by its own light, and verified by its own self-witness. And yet we are asked to believe that He was deceived with regard to the source of this very teaching, and with regard to His own standing in relation to it ; He was in error in thinking that it had any higher source than His own mind ; He was the poor victim of self-delusion in fancying that He was the Sent of God—or the Son of God, or even the Son of Man, in any other sense than all other men are sons of men or sons of God. If so, what are we to think of such a combination of wisdom and folly—of extraordinary strength and as extraordinary weakness—of unexampled insight into the truth both of God and man, and as unexampled blindness as to the truth concerning Himself ? The best of all kinds of wisdom, it has always been thought, and the best of all tests of a man's wisdom, is his knowledge of himself ; but here is a Christ, the Light of the world, who said, and was entitled to say, " He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the

light of life"—who knew nothing of His real Self, and the source of His own wisdom—who took Himself for infinitely more than He really was—who conceived Himself to be the Son and the Sent of God when He was no more than a child of the dust, like other men! Is this a possible combination? Can we conceive of such a combination of opposites—of irreconcilables—in the same mind, and that a sane mind? Does not such a conception amount to a *reductio ad absurdum*?

Or is the alternative allegation a whit more tenable—that, without being deceived Himself, He was a deceiver of others? The alternative in this case is of a moral kind, and introduces an element of incoherence and contradiction into Christ's moral and religious consciousness which is absolutely insoluble, or rather which amounts to a moral and spiritual impossibility. Take this allegation, as before, in connection with the optimism of His religion as a law of righteousness for the government of human life, and as an institute of salvation for a sinful race from the guilt and power and defilement of sin. His very name denotes "the Saviour from sin"; His very life-blood was shed to cleanse the world from sin; His gospel was sent forth to bless the world by turning men away, everywhere, from their iniquities: and yet the allegation is that Christ Himself was a deceiver of the people, a self-conscious misleader, the greatest and most gigantic Impostor that ever breathed. For it must

needs come to this, if we admit the idea of imposture at all—remembering the infinite magnitude of His personal claims and self-assertions. What an impossible combination of attributes in the same character, in the same historical Personality, have we here! What equal antagonism in the same mind to sin and to goodness! What unexampled and prodigious intensity of devotion, both to holiness in the case of others, and to wickedness and falsehood in His own case! What an inconceivable and incredible fighting against the power of sin in the world by the sinful weapons of deceit and deliberate imposture in Himself! What a preposterous and impossible zeal, to be the Regenerator of the world of men by means of a course of action and influence steeped in the deepest dyes of deception and mendacity! Are we not here a second time in presence of a monstrosity so enormous as to be an indubitable nullity—a plain impossibility? Have we not here again a *reductio ad absurdum* twice told? Away, then, with all such historical incredibilities for ever! Let us embrace all the miracles of Christ's Person and history, rather than admit to our minds such stark and degrading monstrosities as these. The credulity of believing such absurdities is dishonouring both to the understanding and the heart. "Christ, the Miracle of history," is a holy miracle, a miracle of goodness, a miracle both of light and love; and it is ennobling to the reason and the heart of men to believe in Him.

But if men will not accept a miraculous Christ, there is nothing left to them but to believe in a historical monstrosity—a *lusus naturæ*, a misbirth of time, the worst and most incredible ever known in the annals of the world.

Such is the intellectual or logical argument which I think may be soundly made use of to prove the Divine truth of Christianity from its adaptation to all the deepest needs of the human heart. But I must not omit, at the close of this argument addressed to the understanding, to refer briefly to another way, quite different from this, in which that adaptation often comes home to the consciences and religious feelings of men with a force of impression and conviction which they are unable to resist, and which they feel constrained to ascribe equally to the Divine truth of the message and to a Divine power accompanying and sealing it upon their hearts. This is what Dr. Chalmers calls “The *Experimental* Evidence of Christianity,” or the evidence resulting from the experience of its moral and religious power in the soul. It turns upon the same adaptations of Christianity to the human heart of which I have been all along discoursing; but upon these adaptations as felt and experienced by the *heart*, rather than as seen and appreciated by the intellect;—as realized under the direct home-thrusts which the Gospel aims at the sinner’s conscience, urging him to cry out, “What must I do to be saved? O wretched man that I am!—who shall deliver me

from this body of sin and death?" and opening his heart to receive "the consolation of Christ," and the peace-bringing message of the Prince of Peace. Of the adaptations of the gospel, first to search and rouse the souls of men, and next to settle them in assured peace and hope upon the only solid foundation, the *hearts* of men, it is manifest, are able to arrive at a much more vivid and effective conviction than their understandings. To feel a truth is much more than to see a truth. To know a truth by experience, in the very depths of the soul, is vastly more than to learn it by the hearing of the ear, or to admit it as an idea to a place in the system of our thoughts. To have taken a medicine into the body, and to have experienced a cure thereby, gives one a very different sort of assurance of its healing power than the information of the physician or another patient. Hence the deep conviction of the Divine power and truth of Christianity which springs up immediately in the minds of men, when they find themselves actually stirred and wakened up to newness of life under its teaching and appeals. Nothing ever so stirred them before; nothing ever so quickened and inspired them to newness of life before: and all this stirring, and quickening, and newness of life, their consciences assure them to be good and holy—all undoubtedly agreeable to God's will, and all unquestionably proceeding from God's own truth and power.

No man, of course, is able to sympathise with such experiences of the healing power of the gospel, unless he has had such experiences himself. This kind of evidence, therefore, can only have convincing effect upon those who have passed through such moral and spiritual experience. But even to others it should not go quite for nothing. The fact is surely a suggestive one, that multitudes of men have passed, and are passing in our own day, and, so to speak, before our own eyes, through this very process of spiritual and moral change, under the earnest and simple preaching of the gospel-message. The fact is an unchallengeable one, and must have its explanation. The explanation which all true converts and true Christians themselves give of it, is at least an adequate one to account for the facts; and no other explanation has ever been found of which as much can be said. How powerfully is the nature and relevancy of this experimental evidence of Christianity set forth in the following passages of Vinet's "Discourses"!

What a striking picture does he give us of the way in which a man who begins, like many others, by being a votary of proud reason, is brought to acquiesce with joy in the teaching of Christ, and so to enter into God's rest and peace!—

"What, then, does our Heavenly Father do, when He desires to save such a soul? He leaves it for a time to struggle with its speculations, and to vex itself with their impotence. When

it is weary and despairing, when it has acknowledged that it is equally incapable of stifling or of satisfying its cravings for light, He takes advantage of its humiliation ; He lays His hand upon that soul, exhausted by its efforts, wounded by its falls,—and compels it to sue for quarter. Then it humbles itself, submits, groans ; it cries for succour ; it renounces the claim to know, and desires only to believe ; it pretends not to comprehend, it only aspires to live. Then the heart commences its functions ; it takes the place of reason ; anguished and craving, the heart is such as God would have it. It sues for grace, and lo ! there is grace ; it asks for aid, and aid comes ; it craves salvation, and salvation is given. On that heart confused and miserable is then bestowed—nay, lavished—all that was refused to reason proud and haughty. Its poverty enables it to conceive what its wealth kept it from knowing. It comprehends with ease, it accepts with ardour, the truths which it needs, and without which no human soul can enjoy peace or happiness. And thus is fulfilled the word of wisdom, ‘ Out of the heart proceed the springs of life.’

“ Will ye come, proud spirits,” Vinet adds, addressing himself to the sceptics of our time, “ and demand from such an one an account of his faith ? Certainly he will not explain to you what is inexplicable : in this respect he will send you away poorly satisfied. But if he says to you—if he can say to you—‘ I love,’ ought not such a response to satisfy you ? If he can say, ‘ I no longer belong to myself, nor to honour, nor to the world ; my meat is to do the will of my Heavenly Father ; I aspire to eternal good ; I love in God all my brethren with a cordial affection ; I am content to live, I shall be happy to die ; henceforth all is harmony within me ; my energies and activities, my destiny and desires, my affections and thoughts, are all in accordance ; the world, this life, and human things are not the mystery which torments me, nor the contradiction that causes me to despair ; in a word, I am raised to newness of life.’ If he says—if he *can say* to you—all this, and his whole life corroborates his words, ah ! then do not waste on him vain reasonings ; try not to refute him ; he has truth, for he has life.

.... Does the person who enjoys sight need to be told there is light? Can one in good health be persuaded he is sick? These are irrefragable verities, the proof of which is *in himself*—nay, more—of which he *is himself* the living proof.”

In another place, where he is treating of the certainty of Christian faith as one of its characteristics, he has the following remarkable passage:—

“I do not speak of that array of external proofs which form the imposing bulwark of the Christian revelation—proofs for which the sceptics of our day affect a contempt so little philosophical, and which scarcely one in a hundred gives himself the trouble to examine. I do not speak of them here [in the pulpit], for they are not equally within the reach of all the faithful. But the Christian has a proof better still : he has God present in the heart ; he feels every moment the influence of the Spirit of God in his soul. He loves,—therefore he has the truth : the proof is not of a nature to be communicated by words,—but neither can words take it away. You cannot prove to him that he does not love God ; and if he loves God, will you dare to insist that he does not know Him? I ask, Can he who loves God be deceived? Is he not in the truth? And if Christianity alone gives him power to love God, is not Christianity exclusively the truth? Such is the certainty in which the faithful rejoice. I do not add that it is cherished and quickened by the Holy Spirit ; I only speak of obvious facts—facts respecting which the unbelieving as well as the believing can satisfy themselves. And I limit myself to saying that the faith of the true Christian has for its peculiar characteristic a certainty which elevates it above that of any other belief.

“Behold, ye men of the world, ye thinkers, ye great actors in the concerns of time ! behold the faith which I propose to your hearts empty and famishing for faith ! Certainly it does not depend upon me to make you accept it by the picture which I

have traced, nor upon you to become its votaries through this simple exposition. Arguments do not change man ; it is life which teaches life,—it is God who reveals God. But is what we have said without some attainable end and application? No,—if we have succeeded in making you understand at least the imperfections of your own faith and the superiority of Christian faith with reference to life and action. As to the first point, it is, I believe, beyond contradiction. As to the second, my only object was to demonstrate that, like all other beliefs, the Christian religion renders homage to a want of the human soul, and—what no other belief has yet done—that it has satisfied this want ; that it has an *intensity*, a *generality* of application, an *elevation* of tendency, and, in fine, a *certainly* which no other possesses ; that in all these respects it presents a type of perfection which has never been realized in any human invention ; and that if God Himself has given a faith to the world, it is impossible that He should have given a better in any respect. After this it would appear quite superfluous to inquire if the Christian religion is true. To us this proof is sufficient ; and we earnestly pray that it may strike others as it strikes us.”

But what, let us now ask before we close, are the latest replies which the class of men here addressed by the Swiss philosopher and divine have been giving to all such pleadings and appeals of the Christian advocate? What are the substitutes which they have been lately offering to us in room of this perfect practical religion of Jesus Christ?

We have here a choice of substitutes ; for the world’s philosophers and free-thinkers, it is worth while to note, are far from being agreed among themselves as to what should take the place of Christianity—although of one mind in thinking the over-hasty thought that Christianity has waxed old and is ready to vanish away.

the substitute proposed by Strauss in his work—"The Old Faith and the New." By this new faith he means that the world should have no religious faith at all—no God as distinct from the Universe, and no heaven but the visible skies. Beginning his career as a theologian and a preacher, he ended by saying to Science and Poetry and Music, Ye are my gods. He believed in no higher divinities; he wished for himself and for mankind no higher worship. He was at the very opposite pole of thought and sentiment to Jesus Christ—to whom God was all in all, but to Strauss nothing. But to say this is the same thing as to say that he was at the very opposite pole of thought and feeling to human nature itself. His philosophy is an absolute negation of all the religious feelings and needs of the soul. It is an amputation of our nature, a dismemberment of our life—not a provision for it; a grim scoffing and mockage at its moral and religious wants—not an adaptation to them.

Next we have Comte's substitute for Christianity—*viz.*, the worship of Humanity. He agrees with Strauss in setting aside the worship of Deity, but differs from him in thinking that men must have a worship of some religious kind; and he proposes to them to introduce the worship of their own race, conceived of as a whole—past, present, and future—and as represented by all its greatest geniuses and benefactors of every age and nation. He set an example of this

strange worship in his own person : he instituted what he called a Church and a ritual and a hierarchy ; and he published a Church calendar, filled with the names and commemoration-days of philosophers, poets, artists, and patriots, instead of the prophets and apostles of the Bible and the canonized saints of Rome. I cannot find any information to show that this new worship and Church have made any way in the world ; and no wonder ! If the philosophy of Strauss is a cynical repudiation of the religious element of our nature, this philosophy of Comte is as cynical a caricature of it : as though the religion proper to our instincts could ever mean anything but the worship of God, however erroneously conceived of God might be,—as though it could ever mean the worship of Humanity itself as distinct from God, as a substitute for God, as a rival and competitor with God ! And what needs of the human heart could such a worship of Humanity ever satisfy ? At bottom it is nothing but the worship of self—human beings worshipping their own nature and kind—implying and signifying that Humanity is a sufficient object to meet and supply the moral and spiritual wants and aspirations of all its units. But is it possible, taking human nature as it is, with all its moral needs and ideals and cravings, that men and women at large could ever be taught or induced to think and feel in this manner of Comte ? How miserable would be the issue, if ever they could be taught to do so ! It would,

in effect, dehumanize their humanity. For surely the truest, noblest, and most characteristic thing in human nature is its aspirations after what it cannot find in itself—its ideals of an excellence and glory of goodness and nobleness far surpassing its own, and which it can only adore and in measure imitate; but which, if it ceased to adore, it would cease to imitate; and, ceasing to imitate, would cease to confess its own inferiority, and to strive against its own descent to ever lower and lower levels of corruption and degeneracy.

Mr. Mill also recommends to the world a religion of Humanity; but a religion without any ritual or worship—a religion of simple duty to mankind,—a devotion of the individual man to the interest and service of the human race. It is a new and paradoxical use of the term religion, thus to apply it to a system of morals which is professedly without God, and which is put forward as a substitute for all that is usually understood by religious faith and life. Nor has this “religion of humanity” any more chance than Comte’s “worship of humanity” to find many disciples. For what adaptation to the religious instincts and needs of the human heart is there in a system which ignores all these instincts and needs by ignoring God the Object of them, and which virtually tells mankind that they have no need to trouble themselves about God at all, and their relations to Him, but would do better to give all their thoughts and care and exertions to the ser-

vice of their own race in its present and future generations? Mr. Mill is not a dogmatic atheist, like Strauss and Comte; he pronounces, in one of his posthumous Essays, on the side of Theism, though with no great decision of conviction; but his "religion of humanity" is conceived of in a practically atheistic spirit. It implies throughout that the fulness of God has nothing to do with the fulness of man and his life; that if men wish to attain to greater satisfaction in their lives, they are to seek for that not in any fresh light, or grace, or strength, or blessing which they can hope to obtain from on high, but only in what they may hope to confer of good, or benefit, or blessing upon their fellow-men. And what, moreover, is this but to teach men some part of their duty to one another, while severing, at the same moment, every bond and tie that connects the duty of man with the faith and the love and the loyal service of God? Such a teaching of the duties of philanthropy cuts away philanthropy from all those living roots of religion in which it has always found its chief strength and support, and in separation from which all experience shows that it can never have more than a feeble, precarious, and inefficacious life. This is to demand fruits without roots. This is to disjoin and cut asunder the two great commandments of that grand old Law of God which will doubtless survive all these crude inventions of men: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,—and thy neighbour as thyself." As though love to God

did not mean also love to man ; and as though love to man, of the best and most energetic and persistent type, did not mean also love to God,—to separate which two loves is the same sort of folly as it would be to break the connexion of the working machinery of a factory with the steam-engine which supplies all the motive power, or to expect the limbs of the human body to continue their living action and movement when “the wheel has been broken” at the vital cistern of the heart.

The last substitute for Christianity brought forward by modern philosophy is that proposed by Professor Tyndall in his Belfast address. Conceding “the unquenchable claims of the religious and moral sentiments of our nature,”—“the immoveable basis of the religious sentiment in the nature of man,”—all the religions of the world are to him “the forms of a Force capable of being guided to noble issues in the sphere of emotion, which is its proper and elevated sphere.” All this sounds very hopeful at first ; but we soon discover that in it all he does not mean to say a single word in favour of keeping Christianity in the world, but only to prepare the way for a new religion of his own, which he recommends us to substitute in its room,—a religion of “the creative faculties of man” as distinguished from “his knowing faculties,”—a religion of emotion and imagination, not a religion of fact and knowledge.

First, he calls the Divine Object of all religion the

Mystery—the Insoluble Mystery—about whom, that is to say, nothing is known or knowable to the understanding or the knowing faculties ; and then he goes on to speak of our forming conceptions of the Mystery as best we may, and fashioning it to our thoughts in such wise as to be consistent with science, from age to age. But is there not a plain, practical contradiction of thought here ? If the Mystery is wholly inscrutable and unknowable, where is the sense or use of forming conceptions about it ? How is what is pronounced to be inconceivable or unthinkable to be conceived or thought of ? Can any labour of the mind be more fruitless and inept and foolish than such religious employment of it ?

Again, Professor Tyndall relegates all such religious conceptions to the *creative* faculties of the mind as distinguished from the *knowing* faculties ; and this he does quite consistently with his assertion that God is “the insoluble Mystery.” For an object not knowable is of course no proper object for the knowing faculties ; and if the human mind is still to occupy itself with such an object, it can only be with its non-knowing faculties—only with its creative faculties ; those which Shakespeare, who possessed them in such perfection, describes as

“giving to *airy nothings*
A local habitation and a name.”

What are these “airy nothings” of the poet’s ? His conceptions, his fancies, his imaginations, which have

no existence save in his own mind, and to which he gives a local habitation and a name only in his own verse. See, then, the quality which the religious conceptions by which we are to fashion the Mystery to ourselves must possess. The quality must be the same which attaches to all the products of the creative faculties—the quality, that is to say, of unreality, of untruth, shadows, dreams ; and it is only in keeping with this quality of our religious conceptions, to tell us, as he does, that these conceptions can never attain to fixity ; that they must be in a state of perpetual flux from age to age ; that they must always flee like ghosts before the daylight of scientific thought. Of course they must, if they are not truths, but fancies ; not religious prose, but religious poetry ; not religious facts, but religious fictions—“ airy nothings.” But alas for the lot of poor humanity, in having to toil on from age to age, like Sisyphus in the Shades, at this bootless rolling up the hill of conceptions and ideas of God, which no sooner reach the summit than they roll down again to the bottom, and the work of religious conception has all to be done over again !—or in being doomed, like the daughters of Danaus in the same unreal regions, to be for ever pouring water into a cask which is for ever discharging it ! These are the fabled torments of the Shades—tormenting, because utterly vain and useless ; and such-like must be the tormenting toils of men when sent, as some of our philosophers would send them, to

be for ever working out conceptions of religious truth under the stimulus of religious feeling, when, without any revelation of God by work or word, God is and must be unknowable and unknown.

Such, then, are the substitutes for Christianity proposed to the world by these four distinguished masters of intellectual philosophy and science. Does not the old proverb of the East, once quoted by our Lord, apply admirably to this case—"No man having tasted old wine straightway desireth new, for he saith, The old is better"? We render all due homage to the genius of these philosophers and men of science in their own departments of human knowledge, but we cannot think that any of them are destined to be remembered as founders of religions. The worship of the universe, the worship of humanity, the religion of humanity, and the religion of "the creative faculties," can never possibly become religions of the *heart*; and it is by their hold of the heart that all world-conquering religions grow and prosper and prevail. These new religions are all the latest growths of knowledge or science. And "Who loves not knowledge?" demands Tennyson—thoughtfullest and most melodious of our living poets—in his "In Memoriam": who teaches us, however, in that great work, a much truer and deeper wisdom than any of these masters of knowledge:—

"Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix

With men, and prosper ! Who shall fix
Her pillars ? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire ;
She sets her forward countenance,
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain ;
She cannot fight the fear of death.
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain

Of demons, fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power ? Let her know her place :
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain ; and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With Wisdom, like the younger child.

For she is earthly, of the mind ;
But Wisdom heavenly, of the soul.
O friend, who camest to thy goal
So early, leaving me behind,

I would the great world grew like thee,
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but, by year and hour,
In reverence and in charity."

*THE ADEQUACY OF THE CHRISTIAN ANSWER
TO ALL DEEPER QUESTIONS.*

BY THE
LORD BISHOP OF GLOUCESTER AND BRISTOL.

*THE ADEQUACY OF THE CHRISTIAN
ANSWER TO ALL DEEPER QUESTIONS.*

I HAVE now the responsibility of bringing before you a form of evidence, in reference to the truth of Christianity, which is felt by many at the present time to carry with it no small amount of conviction.

It is the evidence afforded by the fact which it will be my duty to substantiate—that the Christian system supplies to every sober and candid enquirer answers with regard to all the deeper questions relating to human life far more soul-satisfying and far more convincing than are furnished by other systems, whether of religion or philosophy.

What I desire, in fact, to maintain, is this,—that whenever we make an attempt to solve the mysteries and account for the inconsistencies which human life presents to us on every side, whenever we try to give a reasonable account of the varied phenomena which even a single day's experience may bring before us, we find the solutions suggested by Christianity, and the explanations deduced from the ground-principles

of the Christian creed, immeasurably more consonant with reason and more accordant with phenomena than any others that have yet been adduced. The proof of this will form the subject-matter of this Lecture, and may rightly be regarded as involving a subsidiary evidence to the truth of Christianity of considerable force and validity. We do not, of course, claim that this assertion, even if it be clearly shown to be true, carries with it anything more than a presumption that the system which supplies these answers and solutions is itself based on truth and reality. The argument is confessedly only a subsidiary one ; but yet it has been found by many of the most cultivated minds so reassuring, so persuasive, so inwardly convincing, that if we were able to institute a comparison between the amount of influence exercised at the present time by the various forms of Christian evidence, positive or negative, we should find that to this form, which we are now about to develop, would be assigned the foremost place in importance and in real practical persuasiveness. The general statements of those influenced by it would probably be of the following import :—" We find ourselves encompassed with difficulties and mysteries in reference to human life, its origin, purpose, characteristics, and general relations to the system of things around us. For four thousand years these difficulties have been felt by all the more competent thinkers of all cultivated nations. Answers have been given in

every varied form, and have received every varying degree of authoritative sanction. They have been embodied in ancient religions ; they have formed the very life of ancient formularies, and have been the quickening principle of ancient creeds. Philosophers have expanded them into systems, lawgivers have incorporated them in their codes ; statesmen have rested on them ; historians have illustrated them ; poets have sung of them : and yet all these answers—all, save the answer of Christianity—have been ultimately felt to be, and often sadly avowed to be, unsatisfying and inadequate. The sombre questions that man's anxious heart, age after age, has put forward—the Whence, the Why, and the Whither, of human life and destiny—have never been answered in any manner that has been found to satisfy the feelings and the reason ; and unanswered and unanswerable these questions still remain, save on the postulates of Revealed Religion, and the ground-principles of our common Christianity.”*

* It is hoped that this lecture may incidentally disprove what may properly be called a very hard saying on the part of the author of the recent, and now well-known, attack on Christianity, entitled *Supernatural Religion*. This saying is as follows :—“It is singular how little there is in the supposed revelation of alleged information regarding that which is beyond the limits of human thought ; but that little is of a character which reason declares to be the ‘wildest delusion.’” (Vol. ii. p. 490.) Whatever may be said as to the nature of the information, this would seem to be certain—that the amount

Such would seem to be the general statement of the case on the part of those who are most influenced by that form of evidence which we are seeking to develop. And we must admit, at the very outset, that there is at least some clear indication afforded by one of the current tendencies of thought in our own times that such statements are, in part at least, undoubtedly correct. That indication is supplied by the tendency of all modern non-Christian thinkers who are in any degree consistent, not only to avow, but to put forward as a necessary article of a philosophic creed, our enduring ignorance upon all the deeper questions relating to human life, and to insist upon the plain impossibility of our deducing any satisfactory inferences from the phenomena around us as to man's purpose and destiny, or his relation to the invisible and the future. Some doubtful gleams of light have been supposed to make the darkness that rests on the origin of our race a little less palpable than before, but, in regard of life as it passes, its true theory and significance, all seems to be either hidden or unknowable. "Life," says one of these writers,* "is a secret for us, and will always remain so;" its purpose unknown, its future inconceivable. Even in reference to the question of an endurance in any form after death,

is *not* small. Contrast the sketch given by Butler (*Analogy*, part ii. chap. 7) of the wide scope, as well as distinctive character, of the revelation.

* Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte*, p. 7.

the least hopeless in this respect of recent non-Christian writers* finds no assurance whatever of a life after death on the grounds of natural religion, and concedes to us little more than the possibility of indulging in the hope of future existence, if such a hope should be felt to be either conducive to satisfaction or usefulness. With the justness or otherwise of such conclusions we are not at present concerned, but we may at any rate appeal to the prevalence of this creed of nescience,† as indicating that the answers hitherto given to the deeper questions relating to human life have been felt by cultivated thinkers to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. Ignorance has been deemed to be a safer creed.

Whether the answers given by Christianity will ultimately meet with any better acceptance at the hand of this school of thinkers, may be considered very problematical ; but still something will be gained for the general argument, if we show not only that the answers supplied by Christianity are intrinsically

* Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 198. See below, p. 277, note.

† All modern thinkers who insist strongly upon the relativity of all knowledge seem ultimately to arrive at the profession in some form or other of this cheerless belief. "By continually seeking to know," says Mr. Spencer, "and being continually thrown back with a deepened conviction of the impossibility of knowing, we may keep alive the consciousness that it is alike our highest wisdom and our highest duty to regard that through which all things exist as the Unknowable." (*First Principles*, p. 113, ed. 2.)

more reasonable than any others that have as yet been adduced, but also that they present a thoroughly intelligible theory of human life, and a theory that accounts for many of the more perplexing phenomena.*

There are, however, two or three preliminary considerations to which attention must be directed before we enter on a formal discussion of the answers of Christianity, and contrast them with the answers which have been furnished by other religions or philosophies. And the first is this,—that we must clear these answers of all the incrustations that have formed round them, and have often been claimed to be an integral part of the original substance.† What we

* This particular form of evidence is specified among those enumerated by Pascal: “La doctrine qui rend raison de tout [jusqu’aux contrariétés qui se rencontrent dans l’homme, et toutes les autres choses singulières, surnaturelles, et divines que y éclatent de toutes parts].” *Pensées*, p. 365 (258), 368 (174), ed. Faugère. The words in brackets were, however, probably added by early editors.

† There is perhaps no tendency which operates more injuriously at the present time than that of substituting for the answers of Scripture answers which are really ecclesiastical rather than biblical. It may not be desirable to draw the sharp distinctions which we find in recent dogmatical works (as for example, in Rothe’s posthumous *Dogmatik*, Heidelberg 1870,) between the answers of Scripture and those of the “Kirchliche Lehre,” which is often studiously contrasted with it; but it certainly is necessary to revert far more to direct Scriptural statements, and also to consider those statements with due reference to the general teaching of the inspired writer from

have now to consider are those answers which are clearly and unquestionably set forth by Holy Scripture;—not the answers of any system or school of theology, but the answers which calm and fair reasoning derives from those portions of Scripture which have been judged by all competent interpreters to refer clearly and plainly to the matter under discussion. Nothing has tended more seriously to weaken the true force of the answers of Christianity than the doctrinal additions with which they have been associated; and, in an argument such as the present, nothing can be of more vital importance than this,—that our statement of Christian truth should be derived clearly and directly from Holy Scripture, and be set forth in the fullest breadth and simplicity.

On the other hand, in contrasting with Christianity the answers of other systems, we must use no less care in presenting these answers in the clearest form in which they appear to have emerged from the systems to which they belong. And this, it may be observed, is no easy task, especially in the department

whom they are taken. Hence the use of such works as Reuss, *Théologie Chrétienne* (ed. 3, Strasburg 1860), Messner, *Die Lehre der Apostel* (Leipz. 1856), Van Oosterzee, *Theology of the New Testament* (Transl., London 1871),—in all of which not only the general teaching of Scripture, but also the distinctive teaching of each one of the sacred writers, is clearly set forth. On the subject generally, see Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 27, p. 51 (Clark), and the brief but suggestive comments of Voigt, *Fundamentaldogmatik*, p. 676 sq., Gotha 1874.

of modern philosophies. In the great religions of the past, and in the leading systems of early philosophy, we can commonly elicit with some fair amount of approximate correctness the leading truths which they embody,* and the answers they supply to the simple and broad questions which will come before us in this lecture. But it is otherwise when we have

* Even here, however, great difficulties are met with by the candid enquirer. To say nothing of the difficulties in this respect connected with such a religion as Brahminism, which has undergone the modifications of thirty centuries of acute and restless thought,—or of a religion such as Buddhism, which has not only a boundless canon, but has been variously modified by the characteristics of the widely separate nations among which it has flourished : to say nothing of such difficulties, but to take very simple cases, we may find it often far from easy to state correctly the views of ancient religious thinkers in reference to the broadest questions. To take an instance, we may find it stated by so careful a writer as Archdeacon Hardwick (*Christ and Other Masters*, p. 305, ed. 3), in reference to the broad question of the nature of man, that “vice in the system of the Chinaman is only a rare and casual deviation from the path of rectitude”; and yet when we consider carefully the language of the great thinker (Mencius) on whose authority it is made, we find that after all no more was meant by the declaration that “man’s nature is good,” than has been maintained by Bishop Butler in his *Sermons on Human Nature* (see Legge, *Chinese Classics*, vol. ii. pp. 60-66, London 1861), where the teaching of Mencius on this question is carefully analysed. Very similarly, we find writers of the highest standard by no means agreed on such very general questions as the original monotheism or otherwise of the earliest of the Vedas; compare, for example, Wilson, *Essays*, vol. ii. p. 51, with Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v. p. 412 sq.

to deal with modern systems of thought. Very often the answer we may be seeking is advisedly not formulated, and studiously left floating in the general atmosphere of the system. Very often the answer that may be given does not fairly emerge from the system, but is really due to speculative inferences which, as some recent instances have shown, science is often quite as ready as theology to found upon very insufficient data, and to draw from very fluctuating premises. Very often, too, a clear answer upon some of the questions that will come before us in this lecture can hardly be elicited, owing to the complex nature of the system to which we may appeal,* or to the changes and modifications which, as in the case of the philosophy of Schelling, may have been silently introduced in its development.

Such are but a few of the difficulties associated with our subject,—difficulties which, it may be frankly confessed, we shall probably be unable wholly to surmount, but of which it seems desirable to take some cognisance before we enter into the momentous and

* It may seem strange that, on such a broad question as this, —whether a given writer was or was not a pantheist,—any doubt could be entertained; and yet I believe it is still a debateable question among the students of Hegel whether he is or is not to be considered an exponent of that cheerless belief. His statement, “ohne Welt ist Gott nicht Gott,” seems to leave but little doubt on the subject: see Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 82, p. 177, and comp. Mill (Dr.), *Pantheistic Principles*, part i. p. 73, note; see, however, Stirling, *The Secret of Hegel*, vol. ii. p. 580.

debateable questions which will now claim our closest consideration.

All the deeper questions relating to human life will be found to be included in four or five familiar but comprehensive questions: What? and Whence? Why? For what? and Whither? Or more fully: What and Whence is man? Why is he as he is? For what called into being? Whither, this life ended? These questions seem to cover the whole ground, and to present to us conveniently and compendiously these four subjects,—the origin and nature of man, the moral meaning of human life in its relation to the constitution of things around us, man's purpose, and man's future,—all of which we will now endeavour to consider as fully as the limits of a single lecture will permit, and as far as Scripture and experience will enable us to speak.

Let us begin with the question that for the last few years has been occupying the foreground of modern thought, and on the true answer to which the answers to the remaining questions in a great degree depend. What is the answer of Revealed Religion and of Christianity in reference to the What and the Whence (for it will be convenient to take these two questions together),—the origin and the nature of man? What is the answer? Clear, definite, and intelligible: that man was dust of the earth quickened by the breath of God,*

* Gen. ii. 7. The important point in this verse is that man came into being by no process of emanation, but was specially

and specially formed in His image ; * and further,—that, as an inspired apostle told a cultivated heathen audience, “ God has made of *one blood* all nations for to dwell on the face of the earth.” †

Such, very briefly, is the Scriptural and Christian answer in its broadest outlines : on the one hand distinct in reference to all points of primary importance,—such, for example, as the special creation of man, his formation in the image of God, his spiritual as well as material nature, and the unity of the race ; on the other hand, silent or partially silent on subordinate questions,—such as the antiquity or otherwise of the human family, and similar matters of detail on which some differences of opinion may very fairly be ad-

and directly formed by God out of existing materials on the one side, and out of the blessed fulness of the Divine life on the other. Holy Scripture thus testifies both to the greatness and littleness of man. See Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*, p. 88 sq. (Transl.) ; comp. Plitt, *Evangelische Glaubenslehre*, § 27, vol. i. p. 204, and Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 67, p. 365 (Transl.)

* Gen. i. 27. On this cardinal and most important statement, see Martensen, *Dogmatics*, § 72, p. 135 sq. (Transl.) ; Müller, *Lehre von der Sünde*, vol. ii. p. 483 sq. ; and comp. Rothe, *Dogmatik*, part i., § 62, p. 260.

† Acts xvii. 26. See Meyer *in loc.*, who rightly points to the expression ἐξ ἐνὸς αἵματος as marking that mankind had one earthly father, as they had one heavenly Father. On the unity of the race, which, as Van Oosterzee truly observes, is of real importance in reference to religious and moral life, see Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 125, note p. 258 ; and on its spiritual significance, Martensen, *Dogmatics*, § 77, p. 149 (Transl.)

mitted. In regard of the last point—the duration of man's existence on earth—it may just be remarked in passing, that the race is presumably not of the vast antiquity that has been recently claimed for it; but still it must be admitted, in the narrative itself there is but little from which any clear inferences can with safety be drawn either way. The chronological data that follow seem to imply a *very* recent origin; and such, no doubt, is the current and popular belief. Still as these data are themselves somewhat fluctuating and uncertain, the inferences drawn from them can never wisely be pressed or insisted upon.* Further than this, it ought not to be forgotten that if we are prepared to concede that the history of the genesis of the earth is told only in broad and general outlines, admirable alike for their simplicity and their now

* See Lenormant, *Les Premières Civilisations*, vol. i. p. 53,—where the difficulty of arriving at any distinct conclusion on this subject is simply but clearly put forward. This much, however, may certainly be said,—that if the fifty-nine centuries, according to the ordinary chronology, be deemed too short, the directly contrary assertions are utterly exaggerated. There appears to be one assumption always made as to the deposits, in which or beneath which supposed traces of man have been discovered—viz., that the accumulation has always been at the same rate. Competent observers, however, give very good reasons for believing that in such places as Kent's Cavern or the Valley of the Somme, the rate of accumulation was far greater in earlier times, and that the vast retrospective calculations are very untrustworthy. See a recent pamphlet by T. K. Callard, entitled *Geological Evidences of Antiquity of Man Reconsidered*, Lond. 1875.

recognised scientific truth,* we may certainly admit that it may be exactly the same in reference to the history of the genesis of the race. That history may be told in similarly broad and general outlines, which future discovery will as abundantly verify as it has already verified the revelation as to the home of the race, and the formation of the phenomenal world. Nay, more,—it does not seem too much to say that, in reference to these subordinate questions, faith may hereafter owe much to science, if faith will but resolve to remain patient and confident. Difficulties in reference to the early history of the human family, which now often press very heavily on the minds of believing and reverent thinkers, may be removed by the results towards which recent discoveries are thought to be leading us. The Atonement itself may even receive a fuller and deeper significance.† The eternal love of the

* The naturalness, simplicity, and grandeur of the Mosaic narrative of the Creation have been recognised by all recent commentators, and especially by Knobel. We have here the true form of what seems to have existed among the primeval traditions of some of the earliest nations, *e.g.* Chaldæans (see below, p. 238, note), Iranians (in one of the hymns of the Zend-Avesta; see *Khorda-Avesta*, Spiegel, vol. iii. p. 241; comp. p. 52 sq.), and Etruscans (see Suidas, *s. v.* Τυρρηνία); see D'Eichtal, *Mém. sur le Texte Primitif du Premier Recit. de la Creation*, p. 15 sq., Paris 1875.

† There is no point in which our modern theology is more defective than in its practically limited estimate of the blessed effects and true characteristics of the Atonement. Though we all may feel and believe that it was “for the sins of the whole world,” yet so little is the *retrospective*, as well as the present and

Son of God for a race, possibly blighted and suffering, after its fall, to an extent hitherto never even imagined,* may perhaps hereafter be more profoundly realized ; and Science may again be found, as she has ever been proved to be in similar questions, the handmaid of Religion, and an enduring witness to the real imprudence and even peril of over-hasty deductions, or of concessions to as yet precarious hypotheses.†

prospective, character of the Atonement generally recognised, and so little has it been brought forward in the current teaching of the Church, that a writer like Mr. Mill can almost confidently and triumphantly point to the fact that the precious gift was so long withheld, as "a moral contradiction which no ingenuity can resolve, and no sophistry explain away." (*Three Essays on Religion*, p. 115.) Had the true cosmical significance of the work of Christ, as it was ever set forth in the earliest teaching of the Church (comp. Irenæus, *Hær.* v. 21), been more dwelt upon in our own times, the calm and fair writer whom we have quoted would never have used such unqualified language. He would at any rate have admitted that on the true Christian theory the force of the apparent moral contradiction was greatly modified.

* Without committing ourselves to any views as to the antiquity of the race, still less to accepting the belief that man appeared prior to the concluding phase of the glacial period (comp. Lyell, *Antiquity of Man*, ch. xiii. p. 273), it may be possible that in the various changes in the temperature and general character of the earth's surface which may have taken place in pre-historic times, the race—as at the Flood—may have undergone wide-spread sufferings. See Lenormant, *Les Premières Civilisations*, vol. i. p. 62. It is certainly curious though perhaps nothing more, that traces of such a supposition are to be found in the Zend-Avesta. See the *Vendidad*, Fargard i. 859 ; vol. i. p. 62, Spiegel.

† There is a tendency at the present time in really religious

But to return to the answer we have just formulated. Before we contrast it with the more current modern answers in reference to the origin of the race, let us observe,—First, that the answer given is in such general accordance with that given by the two most ancient of the heathen religions—Brahminism, and Mazdeeism or the old creed of Persia,*—and in such

writers which ought carefully to be watched ; and it is this,—of framing adjustments to meet what are assumed over-hastily to be certain and accepted scientific truths, but which really are as yet nothing more than at best probable hypotheses. For example, in reference to this very subject, the antiquity of man, we find assumptions, either made or revived, which involve far greater difficulties than they remove. In the interesting *Aspects of Modern Thought*, by Mr. Baring Gould (Lond. 1875), the old idea of a special (Adamite) race, chosen out of the general (anthropoid) race, has been revived ; but such a view seems to introduce far more difficulties than it removes, and to necessitate a strain being put on several passages in the inspired narrative which seems inconsistent with sound principles of interpretation. Comp. Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 66, p. 363. (Transl.)

* Among the many records and monuments of ancient religions that have recently been rendered accessible to general readers, none is more interesting than the Zend-Avesta. It contains portions (the Gâthâs) of great antiquity, which seem to confirm the opinion that a distinct monotheism is to be traced behind all the nature-worship of our Aryan forefathers. See Cox, *Mythology of the Aryan Nations*, vol. i. p. 332. Brahminism, as it has been well remarked by M. Bréal (*Hercule et Cacus*, p. 129), kept to the old belief only in the letter ; Mazdeeism preserved its spirit. The Zend-Avesta has been translated into German by Prof. Spiegel (*Avesta, die Heiligen Schriften der Parsen*, 3 vols., Leipz. 1852, 1859, 1863), and elucidated by

close and even startling coincidence with newly discovered monuments of the early belief of ancient and almost pre-historic Babylon,* that we seem justified in believing that, in the answer of Holy Scripture to the question now before us, we have not only the declarations of earliest Hebrew writers, but the voice of the most primeval tradition. Secondly, we have the only reasonable account that can be given of that instinctive belief in the unity of the race which seems involved in the very idea and conception of humanity. The conception of the family seems so naturally to lead backward and backward to that of the one original family, that we can hardly be surprised to find that this latently forms the substratum of all modern theories of humanity, and is even admitted by scientific writers to become more and more probable in proportion as we lengthen the period of man's occupancy of the earth.† In the physical world the

valuable introductions and notes. See also the same writer *Erânische Alterthumskunde*, vol. ii., Leipz. 1873, where the religion of the Iranian races is carefully investigated.

* For an account of the remarkable Chaldæan legend here referred to, which, it is to be hoped, will soon be published, see *Daily Telegraph*, March 4, 1875. The equally remarkable legend of the Flood will be found in Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, pp. 165-222, Lond. 1875; Lenormant, *Premières Civilisations*, vol. ii. pp. 23-47. The nature of the connexion of the Accadian with the Semitic religions is as yet open to considerable differences of opinion. See Lenormant, *La Langue Primitive de la Chaldée*, p. 388, Paris 1875.

† See Lyell, *Antiquity of Man*, chap. xx. p. 451, Lond. 1871.

river may be swelled by many affluents, and have drawn its first waters from several separate sources ; but it is now felt more and more that it has not been so with the great stream of our race—nay, that, independently of all arguments, we turn from such a view with increasing repugnancy. The brotherhood of man seems to carry with it, and almost demand our acceptance of the idea of a common fatherhood. Though it has been asserted, again and again, that there is really a wider gulf between civilised and savage man than between the lowest savage and the highest order of ape, yet all modern research in physiology and in language is pointing exactly in a contrary direction,* and is tending to show that the oneness of the race is no less presumable from purely anthropological inference, than certain both from the express declarations

* The statement of Van Oosterzee (*Christian Dogmatics*, § 66, p. 363, Transl.), “ that natural science has not yet discovered any races of men so completely different, that it is really impossible to regard them as branches of one tree,” seems now increasingly to be admitted as true. The subject has been investigated with great care and apparent exactness by Rauch, *Die Einheit des Menschengeschlechtes*, Augsb. 1873. The various physiological authorities on the subject are specified by Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 125, note ; comp. also Hardwick, *Christ and Other Masters*, pp. 34 sq., ed. 3, Lond. 1874. The arguments founded on recent philological investigations appear to be unanswerable : see the recent and important work of Reinisch, *Einheitliche Ursprung der Sprachen*, Wien 1874 ; and the accurate and learned treatises of my friend Rev. R. Ellis, *Numerals as Signs of Primeval Unity among Mankind*, Lond. 1873, and *Peruvia Scythica*, chap. v., Lond. 1875.

of Scripture and from the fundamental reasonings of Revealed Religion.*

Contrast with this the contrary opinion—that Evolution is the history of being, and that man came to be man by slow emergence from a lower type of creature, and that, by the law of “Natural Selection,” during the lapse of innumerable ages (for the amount of time which the theory demands is almost limitless),† he acquired what our very instincts lead us to call “the gift of speech,” passed the mystic Rubicon that separates consciousness from self-consciousness, and emerged through dim and clouded instincts into the clear light and wondrous realm of personal love and self-realizing existence. Contrast the two opinions:

* If we only consider the reasoning in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it really seems surprising how a candid and careful writer, like Rothe, could dismiss this subject in a single brief paragraph, as involving no serious considerations. See *Dogmatik*, § 63, part i. p. 265, and contrast with it Plitt *Evangelische Glaubenslehre*, § 27, part i. p. 206 sq., Göttingen, 1863.

† One of the latest and not least able of the defenders of the “Natural Selection” theory thus specifies the time man may be supposed to have been upon the earth: “Ten thousand centuries before the time of Homer and the Vedic poets, wild men, with brute-like crania, carried on the struggle for existence with mammoths, tigers, and gigantic bears, long since extinct. And recent researches make it probable that even this enormous period must be multiplied six- or eight-fold before we can arrive at the time when men first appeared upon the earth as creatures zoologically distinct from apes.” Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 291, Lond. 1874; comp. Darwin, *Descent of Man*, vol. i. p. 199.

concede the exhaustless time that is needed for this latter hypothesis; grant the missing links that are hopelessly absent; accept the confessedly speculative elements in the theory; * ignore the difficulties that have been found in numberless details; set aside the physiological objections as futile or microscopic; † treat the alleged difficulty of any conceivable amount of solar heat, under the present conditions of solar physics, being sufficient to meet the demands that this second answer must make upon it, as purely imaginary; and regard the assumed collisions with recognised geological facts, or with the inferences of fair geological reasoning as unsubstantiated or illusory, ‡—make

* This is very distinctly admitted; Mr. Darwin himself says, "Many of the views which have been advanced are highly speculative." *Descent of Man*, vol. ii. p. 385; compare also Hæckel, *Natürliche Schöpfungs-geschichte*, p. 23. Theologians are frequently charged with advancing merely speculative hypotheses, and, in this respect, are contrasted unfavourably with men of science. It is only fair to remark that the inferences frequently drawn by Science, and especially on subjects of the nature now before us, are often quite as devoid of proof as any that have been advanced by Theology.

† The objections that have been urged by competent physiologists as founded on the structure of the skull of man, when compared with that of apes, are apparently of considerable weight. The special treatises on this subject are enumerated by Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 167, note 2, p. 383.

‡ The arguments against the theory as suggested by geological considerations are very carefully stated by Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 168, p. 384 sq. Compare also the comments already made above in reference to the precarious character of some of the geological assumptions; p. 234, note. The remarkable con-

all these varied concessions, assume for a moment that the two answers rest on equiponderant evidence, and simply and nakedly contrast the two answers to the primary question, and this at least may be asserted: that the first appears to give a more intelligible account of existing phenomena, and is more in harmony with what would seem to be fundamental conceptions than the second. And to this assertion it might also be added that the view which Christianity sets before us of the Whence of humanity makes no larger demands on the reason, and puts no greater strain on the verifying faculty, than that theory of man's origin which is claimed to be the Newtonian discovery of our own generation, but which has already been found to need some serious degree of rehabilitation.*

If this be so,—if every deeper feeling of the human conclusion relative to the rapid succession of systems of fossiliferous strata, to which the theory appears to lead us, is admitted by Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 40.

* It has been pointed out by Mr. Wallace that there must have been a time at which man's brain structure, rather than his merely physical form and appearance, was that which was modified by the principle of natural selection. See *Natural Selection*, p. 311 sq., ed. 2, 1871; comp. Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, part iii. ch. 13, p. 469, note. As Mr. Fiske, so far rightly, observes: "When an animal has once appeared endowed with sufficient intelligence to chip a stone and hurl a weapon natural selection will take advantage of variations in this intelligence, to the comparative neglect of purely physical variations." *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 319 compare the interesting, though almost wildly speculative *Unseen Universe*, p. 190, Lond. 1875.

heart protests against this cheerless answer,—if calmly exercised reason is forced to admit that, under every moral aspect, the answer of Christianity, and of the old faiths of the early ages of the world, is the higher and the more elevating,—if every glow of earthly love seems to call forth the feeling that there *must* be One from whom every ray of love comes forth, and to whom every manifestation of responsive love must necessarily return,—no First Cause scarcely separable, even in thought, from the totality of phenomenal existence,* no omnipresent Energy in an inscrutable Universe, no lost God sunk in the fathomless depths of infinite causalities, no dead Pan in a breathing world of life, but an ever-present Father because a Creator, and a Creator because an ever-loving as well as an everlasting and personal God,—if

* There would seem to be, as Mr. Lewes observes (*History of Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 194, ed. 3), only three views of the relation of the Finite to the Infinite: (1) Co-eternity of Mind and Matter; (2) Existence of one Principle, sometimes conceived as Mind, sometimes as Matter; (3) Existence of one Principle, the Creator of the Universe, but apart from it. Of these, the second seems to be that towards which, in some form or other, modern non-Christian thought is gravitating. Either God is regarded as a “*natura naturans*,” conscious or unconscious, or as a Power manifested through all phenomena, but utterly inscrutable and unknowable. The latter is the view of Mr. Spencer, and apparently the view taken by the majority of modern non-Christian writers. See *First Principles*, § 31, p. 108 sq., ed. 3; comp. Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 417. On the paralogism really involved in Pantheism, see Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 83, p. 177.

this be true in reference to the answer to our first deeper question, how much more will it be found to be so in reference to those that remain! If, in reference to an answer that involves necessarily some physical considerations, the answer of Revealed Religion is apparently the more natural, and the more consistent with phenomena—and so, consequently, the more credible—we shall, perhaps not unnaturally, expect to find the same superiority in the Christian answer when we pass onward to the far deeper questions that relate to the moral mystery of human life, and the moral purpose of the individual. If we seem to feel the superiority of the Christian answer in reference to the nature and origin of man, we may reasonably expect to trace it in the answer to the mysterious Why and still more mysterious For What,—those two deep questions which relate to man's present condition and the ultimate purpose of his being. And so certainly we find it.

II. Let us pass, then, to a consideration of the answer of Revealed Religion to the second and more difficult question, Why, if such be the origin and nature of man, is man in the state in which now we find him? Why are all things in the moral and even material world as now they are? What light does Christianity throw, as compared with other systems, on the moral mystery of human life under the present dispensation of things?

Let us attempt briefly to answer these questions.

In reference to the moral mystery of life, two of the gravest phenomena which present themselves are the apparent waste of moral energy, and the seeming frustration of much of higher moral purpose. "Vanity of vanities," saith the preacher; "vanity of vanities, all is vanity."* And that it is so phenomenally no one can doubt. Mr. Mill speaks of Nature "emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequence of the noblest acts; and it might almost be imagined as a punishment for them."† A more recent writer, whose views of life are by no means influenced by what has often been deemed, and perhaps not unfairly deemed, the pessimism of theologians, has used very similar language. "Grinding misery," says this eloquent writer, "is the lot of many, and regret and disappointment is the lot of all. The life of the wisest man is chiefly made up of lost opportunities, defeated hopes, half-finished prospects, and frequent failure in the ever-renewed strife between evil and good."‡

* Ecclesiastes i. 2.

† *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 29. These three remarkable essays, to which occasional reference is made in this lecture, were written at very different periods of the author's life. The Essay on Nature, from which the quotation is taken, appears to have been written more than twenty years ago, but was to have been published in 1873. See the "Introductory Notice," p. ix.

‡ Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 403 sq. The

If we accept this as a general description of the seeming moral frustration which we are now considering, it may be fairly asked how such a moral chaos can adequately be accounted for. What answer *can* we return to the varied forms of the general question as it is now presented to us? Surely no question could more seriously test any religion or system, as to the soul-satisfying nature of such a religion or system, than that which we have now before us.

The answer of Christianity is, at any rate, perfectly distinct, and fully commensurate with the phenomena. And it is this: that all this strange frustration of moral purpose is due to the entrance of sin into the world, and to its abiding presence there; or, to state the answer still more precisely—that all is due, in the first place, to man's having been led by the temptation of an alien and extraneous Evil Will* to choose the above work, from which the extract is taken, and to which reference has been already made in these notes, is a careful, elaborate, and, it must also in fairness be said, an interesting work. The writer is avowedly a follower of the teaching of Mr. Herbert Spencer; but there are many indications of a reaction towards more distinct views in reference to God. The Universe is regarded as the manifestation of the Deity; but Deity is regarded as something more than the Universe. See vol. ii. p. 404.

* It is with deep truth that Martensen thus writes in reference to the teaching of Scripture on this dark and difficult subject: "However often we are content with such expressions as 'the power of evil,' 'the evil principle,' 'the impure spirit-world,' in our expositions of Scripture, yet the more profound consideration of Scripture, of life, and above all of the stern conflict against

latter of two moral possibilities,—*not* spontaneous surrender of his will to the will of Him who called him into being, but self-seeking aversion from it; and in the second place to the accumulated energies of that aversion as propagated in the race and put forth by each individual of it. The falsely-free turning aside from the will of the Creator converted the *posse mori*, with which man was originally created, into an actuality. Death became man's heritage and destiny, and, in the form of pain, misery, and final disintegration of the body, diffused itself through the race, and flung even some shadows on the realm of nature.* "By one man sin entered into the world, and by sin death."†

evil, will ever lead back our thoughts to the doctrine of an EVIL WILL." *Christian Dogmatics*, § 106, p. 201 (Transl.); see also a good paper on this subject, and especially on the "Satanology" of Schelling, in the *Beweis des Glaubens* for 1873, p. 156. The popular statement is that the Old Testament idea of Satan is mainly of Persian origin (see Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels*, vol. i. p. 193, Leipz. 1869), and that the New Testament conceptions were derived from it. This view, however, in reference to the Old Testament, is justly doubted by thoroughly unbiassed inquirers. See Spiegel, *Arische Studien*, p. 65, Leipz. 1874.

* As Von Baader has somewhere said, "The fall of man was a cosmic event, as when a kingdom falls with its king." It may not be easy to prove this in detail; but both Scripture (Gen. iii. 17; Rom. viii. 20 sq.) and experience seem to recognise it as one of those mysterious truths which in this state of things we must often feel, but which, from our ignorance of the state of man and of nature prior to the Fall, we may never be able to substantiate. See the sensible comments of Plitt, *Evangelische Glaubenslehre*, vol. i. p. 267 sq.

† Rom. v. 12. On the meaning of *θάνατος* in this passage

What we assert then is, that there was the historic event called the Fall,*—that it was brought about by an Evil Will,—and that to the effects of that Fall, and to the mysteriously still permitted and still continuing agency of that Evil Will, all the moral ruin of the world must certainly be attributed.†

(not spiritual, but physical, death), see Meyer *in loc.* ; so all the earlier Greek interpreters. On the varying degrees of inclusiveness of meaning involved in the word, see Philippi, *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*, vol. iii. p. 378 sq., ed. 2, Stuttgart. 1867.

* It is not easy to understand the grounds on which writers such as Mr. Murphy (*Scientific Bases of Belief*, p. 270 ; comp. Rothe, *Dogmatik*, 84, part i. p. 302 sq.) appear to doubt the definitely historical character of the Fall. That there may be symbolism in the narrative may be conceded (comp. Martensen, *Dogmatics*, § 79), but that there was a distinct act in which and by which, through the craft of a mysterious Deceiver (Oosterzee), our first parents manifested a sinful determination of the will, is most certainly the teaching of Holy Scripture. As Martensen has rightly said (§ 47), if we exclude the supposition of a fall, the only alternative is, either to deny sin as a universal phenomenon, or to recognise it as an inherent element in the idea of the world.

† The questions of course remain, Whence nevertheless is moral evil? Why does God permit it? And to such questions no answer can be given except that which is commonly given—That without its emergence and subsequent existence had been permitted, the human freedom, willed and conferred by God Himself, would have been annihilated, or rather, could not have become that which God willed it to be. See Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 62, p. 342 (Transl.). The remark of Martensen, in reference to these profoundly difficult questions, will be found very helpful: "In its essence Omnipotence is a moral and self-limiting power." *Dogmatics*, § 115, p. 216 (Transl.).

This is the answer of Christianity,—an answer that the most determined opponent must admit to be perfectly thinkable, perfectly intelligible, and also fully explanatory of the broad phenomena of life and death, as they are practically presented to experience. Whether the answer, in itself, be considered right or wrong, no fair opponent could deny that it *is* an answer, distinct and consistent, and that it includes, by way of just deduction and inference, solutions of great problems which, before Christianity came into the world, had either been hesitatingly approached, or left aside as hopelessly insoluble. For instance, the answer alone gives to earthly and phenomenal life its true meaning, and to death its real significance. It enables us to surmise, if even not to recognise, what man's life on earth really would have been if the disturbing and self-seeking egoism of the will had not changed man's true theocentric attitude, distorted all the fair lines of his formation and being, and marred that image of God which all deeper observers can still trace in that ideal physiognomy,* as it has been termed, of our fallen but still noble

* All deeper observers have recognised this handwriting of God, as it has been termed, in the human face. One of our greatest living painters owes probably his great and deserved reputation to his power of seeing and depicting these nobler lineaments. The way in which this ideal physiognomy occasionally discloses itself in the faces of the dying has been often noticed. See Martensen, *Christian Ethics*, § 23, p. 86 (Transl.).

humanity. Life, which would otherwise have been only a period of development, and, it may be, of gradual transition to higher and higher stages of being, became at once invested with probationary aspects; limited, as far as the union of the soul and the earthly body is concerned, to a brief space of allotted time,—and yet time of such infinite moment that it is on the use or misuse of this time that the issues of an eternal future irrevocably depend. Death, again, which to unfallen man was simply a possibility, and which, it has been thought, would have been continuously obviated by the workings of now impeded powers, and by laws of a natural immortality,* was changed into an actuality and a punishment. Sin stopped the possible agency of the reparative process, and man, after a brief and transitory period of earthly existence, shares the lot of the animals around him, and realizes that which was to them an attendant condition of existence, but to man simply a possibility,—a possibility, and nothing more.

Such is the light which the Christian answer throws on the mysteries of life and death, and on some of

* On this subject see the interesting and very remarkable treatise of Bp. Bull, *On the State of Man before the Fall* (*Works*, vol. ii. p. 52, Oxf. 1827). The general views of the treatise have been maintained by most of the deeper writers on Christian doctrine of the present time. See Philippi, *Kirchliche Glaubenslehre*, vol. ii. p. 382 sq., ed. 2, Stuttgart 1867; Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 70, p. 678 (Transl.); comp. Sartorius, *Die Lehre von der Heiligen Liebe*, vol. i. p. 32 sq.

the deeper problems of existence. That it enables us to solve all the sad and strange enigmas of individual life,—that we can confidently apply it to the details of every case of personal suffering, or that by means of it we can pretend to explain all the veiled dispensations which so often try the faith even of the unwavering,*—is far more than is here either asserted or implied. But it *does* enable us to trace the true and leading lines of the great moral purposes that are working out their issues in and through that apparent moral frustration and those ruins of earthly happiness which at times seem so strange and inexplicable. The Christian answer, at any rate, leads us to recognise two united truths : viz., that while, on the one hand, owing to the entrance and to the spread of sin, we can almost take the language of such pessimists as Schopenhauer,† and pronounce the

* Some of these are noticed by Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 63, p. 349 (Transl.), and briefly explained. For us, however, who can hardly read the secrets of our own hearts, and cannot even guess at the real moral state of those around us, it is fruitless as well as presumptuous to attempt to solve problems without that preliminary knowledge which must be the *sine quâ non* of any attempt, however limited and rudimentary. "Repent" is the serious and monitory voice of all these veiled dispensations ; comp. Luke xiii. 5.

† See, for example, the sad passage cited from his *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* in the selections from his works (*Lichtstrahlen*, p. 188) by his devoted disciple Frauenstädt. The view taken by his most recent follower, Hartmann, is ultimately the same. After a cheerless investigation (*Philosophie des Unbewussten*, Abschn. C, cap. xiii.) he comes to the conclu-

whole course of *this* world as essentially evil,—we are yet, on the other hand, constrained to admit that the ultimate working and tendency is towards good. It is the most obvious teaching of experience that all evil as it exists in the world, is so marvellously overruled by that mighty working whereby God subdueth all things unto Himself, that the very pain and death which are the consequences of sin, become most potent agents in the development of the highest Christian virtues, and of a pity and love which Schopenhauer himself has declared to be the basis of all morality.* Evil existent and developing, but yet so overruled as by its very development to further the fuller emergence and higher manifestation of that which is good, is the real summary of the moral history of the world, and the broad statement which includes the true solution of the greater part of the baffling mysteries of mortal life. Still, as we have said, we cannot always apply this solution to all the varied details of the moral phenomena around us

sion that “das Nichtsein der Welt ihrem Sein vorzuziehen wäre.” P. 749, ed. 2, Berlin 1874.

* *Die beiden Grundprobleme der Ethik*, p. 212, Frankfort 1841. The first of the two essays, “Ueber die Freiheit des Menschlichen Willens,” secured a prize from the Norwegian Royal Society of Science. The second essay, “Ueber das Fundament der Moral,” was sent in to the Danish Royal Society of Science, but was unsuccessful. A useful and popular sketch of this remarkable but misanthropical writer has been recently published by Ribot, *La Philosophie de Schopenhauer*, Paris 1874.

Still less can we attempt to read all the dark sayings of Nature, or to do more than anxiously point to those mysterious passages in Scripture, where it seems even more than hinted, that much of that ruthlessness in Nature, which a recent philosopher has set forth with such startling power, does really seem to stand in some causal connection with the self-determination of man.* Nay, more,—we seem even justified in believing that this very ruthlessness has become intensified by the fall and dethronement of him who was called into being to be the masterpiece of his Creator's works; and that he for whom all the kingdoms of nature had been prepared, and whole ages of sentient life had been patiently tarrying, had scarcely come into being ere he cast his shadow upon all things around him.† In all these things we can only see, as

* "We will not," says Bp. Martensen, "appeal only to the manifest tokens of moral evil which we so often meet with in nature; we merely refer to the sad truth that asserts itself in the darkness of the human soul, that whispers in the leaves of the forest, in the coiling of the serpent, that howls through the desert in the blood-thirstiness of the wild beasts. But we especially appeal to the fact that there is manifest in nature an enigmatical contradiction of the inner and true teleology of nature—a contradiction of its own inner conformableness to the end designed." *Christian Dogmatics*, § 112, p. 213 (Transl.). It is incontestably true that the indications of design point strongly in one direction,—preservation (Mill, *Three Essays*, p. 185); but it is also equally true that traces of a counter-working and counter-law have been recognised by all thoughtful observers.

† See above, p. 247, note.

through a glass, very darkly. Even with the general answer of Christianity in our minds, we can only give a very faltering explanation of many of the incidents which a single day of life's experiences may bring suddenly before us. We may see clearly the broad principle; but we can rarely, if ever, trace all the subtle lines of providential workings or the sequences of moral causation. We can never, for example, venture safely even to surmise, in any individual case, how much may be due, on the one hand, to punishment through the still-permitted agency of malefic power,* or, on the other hand, to what has been well called the moulding discipline of a fatherly chastisement. We can construct no true Theodicy on this side the

* The numerous passages in the New Testament in which distinct agency of this kind is recognised can never be explained away by any sober interpreter. Not only is it the Evil One that sows the bad seed (Matt. xii. 19, 39), but so mighty still is he in reference to its growth and development, that an inspired apostle can speak of him as "the God of this world": see John xii. 31, xiv. 30, Eph. ii. 2; and comp. Nitzsch, *System of Christian Doctrine*, § 116, p. 236 (Transl.), Rothe, *Dogmatik* § 59, part i. p. 247. Natural evil, considered with reference to the Divine government, is much less incomprehensible than moral evil,—nay, it may often be recognised as a powerful corrective of it: comp. Nitzsch, *System of Christian Doctrine* § 88, p. 198 (Transl.). A sinful world without pain and suffering would be worse than it is now. Of moral evil it may also be said, that it is "ordinabile," and that its course is ever so directed that even we, with our limited powers, can constantly observe how marvellously it is made to minister to good: comp. Plitt, *Evangelische Glaubenslehre*, vol. i. p. 199 sq.

grave: still we can derive from the answer of Christianity, when combined with sober observation and calmly-analysed experience, these three considerations,—which, in any and every estimate of the moral purpose of life and of the mystery of the dispensations around us, will be found especially helpful, and will steady us and guide us amidst many moral perplexities.*

The first consideration is this—that as Christianity seems distinctly to postulate the existence of a sinful history long before man appeared on the theatre of being, much in the order of nature that may now seem opposed to Divine beneficence may owe its existence, not to the frustrated power of that non-omnipotent Creator in which modern philosophy now invites us to believe, not to the essentially intractable nature of the element on which He is essaying to work, but to distinct counter-agencies of a kingdom of evil personalities,† permitted only to exist that the

* On the difficulties connected with any attempt to form for ourselves a Theodicy, see the interesting comments in Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 63, pp. 346 sq., and the article by Ulrici in Herzog, *Real-Encyclop.*, vol. xv. p. 707 sq.

† See Martensen, *Dogmatics*, § 105, p. 198 (Transl.), who justly remarks that “evil had a history before it received a history upon earth” (p. 199). The subject is carefully treated by Van Oosterzee (§ 67), who very rightly insists upon the extreme importance of the truth alluded to in the text. The power of sin is certainly more completely realizable under this conception of its origin,—and if it be quite true that the fundamental difficulty as to the existence of evil at all is only pushed a little

final victory of good over evil might be more blessedly and more morally complete. Is there not the widest application to be given to that instructive declaration of the apostle* in which he tells us that it is "the weak things of the world" that God hath chosen "to confound the things which are mighty; and ignoble things of the world, and things which are despised" that God hath chosen, "yea, and things that are not, to bring to nought the things that are"?

The second consideration is this—that as the *posse peccare* was a necessary element in the moral constitution of the free beings whom a God of love created to reflect that love, so the whole system of this visible world would seem to have been, from the very first, framed by the Divine Artificer so as to become self-adapted and self-adjusted to the determination (be that determination what it might) of the morally free beings for whom it would appear to have been called into existence.† That *the* world might become *this*

further back, it is also true that several phenomena connected with its existence and nature are more explicable on this hypothesis than on any other that has yet been adduced.

* 1 Cor. i. 27, 28.

† This position is maintained by Ebrard, *Apologetik*, §§ 129-132, p. 270 sq., on physical as well as logical grounds which deserve serious consideration. The writer endeavours to show that the present state of nature was distinctly foreseen and provided for, that the present opposition between mind and matter was taken into view, and that the possibility of death becoming converted into an actuality was also provided for from the very first. As yet this general position has not been much insisted

world was prepared for ere the foundations of the world were laid. The possibility of sin and death was ever in the Divine contemplation ; it was recognised, we may presume to say, in the creation of all orders of self-conscious beings, and in the primal constitution of that world which was to be the home and hearth of humanity.*

The third consideration is of a more speculative nature ; and it is this—that, at any rate, in the world as we find it, the course of God's providential government and, if we may presume to say so, of His Divine purpose, is not simply and barely to confer on His creatures the greatest level amount of individual

upon, or illustrated in details ; but it would seem to be one of considerable importance.

* Whether this earth is the only home in the visible universe of beings morally constituted as we are, has often been eagerly debated. At first sight it would seem inconceivable that the Incarnation and Atonement could have reference only to such an atom as this earth is, when contrasted with the countless stars, suns, and systems around it ; but, on consideration, it will be seen that the fact of this earth having been the theatre of these acts of Infinite Mercy does not preclude the Incarnation and Atonement having the widest cosmical significance : comp. Eph. iii. 10, 11, and see above, p. 235, note. There appear to be some physical reasons for thinking that our planet occupies a very unique position, in reference to its general constitution, when compared with the other members of our system ; and also that the same remark applies to our planetary system when compared with other systems around it. See Ebrard, *Der Glaube an die Heil. Schrift und die Ergebnisse der Naturforschung*, Königsb. 1861, and the recapitulation of the arguments in his recent *Apologetik*, § 143, note 1, p. 307 sq.

happiness, but, by drawing forth the highest examples of virtue and holiness, to lead all men to salvation ; and “ after that they have suffered awhile, to perfect, stablish, strengthen, and settle them.”* . . . Whether this was so from the very first, and whether, prior to the fall of man, the emergence of the highest conceivable types and examples was a part of the Divine purpose, we know not ; but this at least we may say, with reverence and humility—that if there be “ thrones and dominions,” and similar traces of degrees in the heavenly hierarchy, so it may have been designed, before man came into being, that in the case of that race which, according to the current belief in the early Church, was created to fill up the lapsed places in that heavenly hierarchy,† there might be higher orders and

* 1 Pet. v. 10. This view, which, it would seem, is of great importance in any estimates we may venture to make of the Divine purpose of creation, is briefly but clearly noticed by Fichte (J. H.), *Anthropologie*, § 266, p. 600 sq., Leipz. 1860. Among more recent writers, Mr. Murphy has devoted a chapter in his last work to this subject, and expresses the substance of it in the following words : “ If the purpose of creation is to produce the highest possible average of human virtue, then creation is a failure. But if it is not to produce the highest possible average of virtue, but to make possible the production of virtue of the highest type, then the purpose of creation has been attained. The highest conceivable type of character has once been realized in Christ ; and it has been aspired after with varying success, and attained in various degrees, by an unknown number of His followers.” *Scientific Bases of Faith*, ch. xvii. p. 246, Lond. 1870.

† This opinion was apparently the current one on the subject

varying degrees of spiritual development. And it thus, at least, is possible that, as has been surmised by recent writers, the purpose of creation may have been, not the production of the highest average of virtue, but of virtue of the highest type. If such a conception be admissible, then some at least of the moral perplexities in reference to the present constitution of things seem ultimately to disappear; some light seems to fall on dispensations which otherwise, on this side the grave, might be deemed to be utterly hidden and inscrutable.

But, to pass onward, such is the answer of Christianity to the deep and mysterious question now before us. And such, to some extent, is the answer that seems to have been permitted to dawn through some of the earlier religions of the world. Some traces there seem to be everywhere of a Fall; some recognitions of the one dread factor and element which all modern systems are tending to explain away or repudiate,—Sin *—sin, which even a pagan

in the early ages of the Church. It was afterwards developed by Anselm, and passed from an opinion into something like a definite dogma. Out of many passages it may be enough to cite Augustine, *De Civitate Dei*, xxii. 1 : “ Qui de mortali progenie merito justeque damnatâ tantum populum gratiâ suâ colligit, ut inde suppleat, et instauret partem quæ lapsa est angelorum; ac sic illa dilecta et superna Civitas non fraudetur suorum numero civium, quinetiam fortassis et uberiore lætetur.”

* Several passages in which deliverance from sin is prayed for, and connected with the somewhat doubtful personification or deity, Aditi, will be found in Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v.

philosopher could imagine as working out its dreadful issues in the soul ages after its first unexpiated manifestations.* But in most modern systems we find no answer at all. We seek in vain for any inferences that might be supposed to cast any single ray of light on the dark problems and moral mysteries of human life. Either it is plainly conceded that the present distribution of moral forces is purposeless and chaotic,† and that all we can do is patiently to wait, and to strive to modify by duty and self-devotion the sad world of frustration and suffering that is around us, or else we find ourselves led back to the twilight of

p. 46 sq. The modern philosopher regards sin very differently,—as a “wilful violation of a law of nature, or a course of thought or action wilfully pursued which tends to throw the individual out of balance with his environment.” Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 455.

* The passage referred to is in the *Leges* of Plato, and is so remarkable as to deserve citation. The subject is sacrilege, in reference to which the speaker says : ὦ θαύμασιε, οὐκ ἀνθρώπινόν σε κακὸν οὐδὲ θεῖον κινεῖ τὸ νῦν ἐπὶ τὴν ἱεροσυλίαν προτρέπον ἵναί, διστρος δέ σέ τις ἐμφυόμενος ἐκ παλαιῶν καὶ ἀκαθάρτων τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀδικημάτων, περιφερόμενος ἀλιτηριώδης, ὃν εὐλαβεῖσθαι χρεὼν παντί σθένει. *De Legg.* ix. p. 854 B ; comp. *Phædr.* p. 244 D.

† Mr. Fiske candidly writes as follows : “The perennial recurrence of war and persecution, the obstinate vitality of such ugly things as despotism, superstition, fraud, robbery, treachery, and bigotry, show *how chaotic as yet is the distribution of moral forces.*” *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 404 ; see p. 501. It is but little consolation to be told, a few lines afterwards, that this state of things is temporarily necessitated “by the physical constitution of the universe and by the processes of evolution itself.”

ancient dualism, bidden to console ourselves with the thought that it is but with us as it is with the God who called us into being, and that the true history of all things is—power limited, purpose impeded, and will itself, even in its highest conceivable embodiment, forced to work through contrivance and design, and to bear enduring testimony to the might as well as to the mystery of matter.*

Non-Christian philosophy has literally no answer. By its acceptance of a first Cause rather than of a loving Creator, and its insensibility to the moral importance of the individual, all true conception of the disciplinary aspects of human life and of a love that purgeth each individual branch only that more moral fruit may be borne, utterly fade away. Evolution knows nothing either of love or of repentance; of fall or of restoration.† Its only morality lies in its

* It is strange how cultivated non-Christian thought seems to be returning in substance to some at least of the principles of early pagan philosophy. The view taken by Plato in the *Timæus* of a Creator "still subject to a remnant of necessity which he could not wholly overcome," and unable to get rid of the residual evil inherent in matter (see Jowett, *Dialogues of Plato*, vol. ii. p. 510 sq.) is now, in effect, after twenty-three centuries of speculation and thought, the only form of belief in the supernatural which a modern philosopher can pronounce to stand clear of intellectual contradiction and of moral obliquity: see Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 116.

† On this point the language of modern non-Christian thought is especially distinct:—"Science," says one of its recent exponents, "knows of no such thing as reparation for sin. Repentance cannot ward off punishment." When we then

stern and untempered teaching of the inevitable permanence of consequences ; but this teaching, salutary as it is when associated with the definitely Christian doctrines of redemption and repentance,* in itself is nothing more than a simple statement of observed facts, monitory and deterrent, but absolutely inadequate to account for the perplexing phenomena of life, or to cast one ray on those dark moral mysteries on which no light has ever rested save that which has been shed by Christianity.

III. But if this be a true statement in reference to the general mystery of human life, still more shall we find it to be so when we pass to the more special and personal question, that question which is of such infinite moment to each one of us,—What is the moral purpose of my being? For what was I born into this world of apparently fruitlessness and frustration? Why am I here? What is the end and object of my existence, and the moral reason of my having been

naturally ask, What *is* Sin? the answer is supplied to us by the same writer : "Sin is a wilful violation of a law of nature, or—to speak in terms of evolution—it is a course of thought or action, wilfully pursued, which tends to throw the individual out of balance with his environment, and thus to detract from his physical or moral completeness of life." Fiske, *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii. p. 455.

* On the permanence of the consequence of sin, see Murphy, *Scientific Bases of Belief*, ch. xxii. p. 308. "Every action," says this writer, "having any moral character, will leave its trace on the destiny and the nature of the doer while he continues to exist." P. 309.

formed into a living soul? The direct answer to this difficult question, as supplied by Christianity, is by no means easy to formulate; nay, it is probable that different answers may be given by Christian thinkers, and varying just in proportion as the principle of love or of duty is the predominant element in a character.* Still it would seem that all may be included in the one comprehensive answer,—the answer of Him who came into the world to give that answer its fullest manifestation,—*to do the will of God*; and that not from any consideration of the recompense of reward, but simply from love of Him who so loved us, that He gave His Son to die for us, and by that death to be the Reconciler, Redeemer, and Restorer of the individual and of the race.

If we accept this as the fundamental answer of Christianity in reference to man's highest purpose upon earth, it becomes comparatively easy to draw the true contrast between this answer and the highest

* The question of man's original destination is considered by Van Oosterzee (*Christian Dogmatics*, § 68, p. 369 sq., Transl.), but mainly in the connexion in which it stands to the doctrine of immortality. This most practical, though confessedly most difficult question has not by any means received the attention it deserves. The true scriptural basis for all deeper thought on this subject must be sought for in the teaching of St. John. The Apostle sets before us the essentials of life in Christ, and so supplies us with the most suggestive indications of what should be life's real purposes: comp. 1 John ii. 5, 14 sq., iii. 23, al. The subject is touched upon, but not by any means satisfactorily, in Rothe, *Dogmatik*, § 66 sq., part i. p. 269 sq.

answer that has ever yet been returned whether by religion or philosophy. The essential difference between the Christian answer and any or every other answer is to be sought for in the motive.* Man's purpose on earth is not simply to do the will of God, but to do that will *for love of God*. Love is the motive principle of the Gospel; and it is the presence of this as the motive principle of obedience to God that sharply differentiates Christianity from every other system which the world has ever known.

If we turn to the ancient religions of the world, we always find that the real motive principle is either fear or self-interest,† and that the moral purpose of

* This will be seen at once if we take one of the more recent statements of man's duty. "It is manifestly our first duty, as it should be our supremest pleasure, to apprehend as clearly as we may the laws by which the Supreme Being governs the universe, and to bring ourselves and our actions into reverent harmony with them, conforming ourselves to their teaching, and learning wisdom from their decrees." *Supernatural Religion*, vol. ii. p. 492. Here all real motive seems absent. Duty is set forth, but not that which gives life to it.

† The commonly received view—*Primus in orbe Deus fecit timor*—has of late been called into question. Hegel speaks of early religion as "the prostration of the mind under the deified powers of nature"; Mill and others regard it as due to "the spontaneous tendency to attribute life and volition to natural objects and phenomena, which appear to be self-moving." This may be so; but behind all this, hopes and fears, and especially the latter, seem always to have been the true moving influences: compare Schopenhauer, *Parerga u. Paralipomena*, vol. i. p. 112, Berl. 1851; and on the whole subject, the full and

life, if ever hinted at, is defined accordingly. Fear is the latent principle of the earliest known forms of the heathen religions of our race. Even where some sense of sin, and some desire to be freed from its liability, appears to have been felt by the worshipper,—as for example in a few of the nobler hymns of the earliest Veda,* or in some of the more elevated passages of the Zend-Avesta,†—there is ever some background of apprehension, some desire to conciliate the powerful Being to whom the prayer is addressed, lest neglect should bring down his anger and chastisement. Even in the nobler and apparently less selfish system of Buddhism there is really no higher principle than self-interest. The substance of the Four Truths is escape from existence, only because existence itself is miserable.‡ The self-denying path that leads to

suggestive comments of Voigt, *Fundamentaldogmatik*, § 5, p. 84 sq., Gotha 1874.

* See above, p. 230, note, and compare Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol i. p. 41 sq.

† The prevailing prayer in the Zend-Avesta would seem to be for purity. “Reinheit ist dem Menschen nach der Geburt das Beste” (Yagna xlvii. 5, Spiegel) is a sentiment which seems to enter into all the higher prayers. This in itself involves consciousness of the contrary. Special penitential forms in which sin is fully acknowledged are also found. See *Khorda-Avesta* xlv. (vol. iii. p. 207, Spiegel), and Spiegel’s comments, vol. ii. p. lix.

‡ The Four Truths are thus stated by Burnouf, on the authority of a fragmentary life of the Founder:—“L’existence de l’état de misère est la première vérité ; la seconde est que cette misère immense repand son empire partout ; la délivrance finale de cette misère est la troisième ; enfin la quatrième

Nirvâna is trodden only because Nirvâna affords the only certain escape from a misery which is felt to be more intolerable than extinction.*

So also if we turn to non-Christian systems of philosophy, be they the most elevated that have yet been propounded, we find still the same insufficiency in the true motive principles. We never find the purpose of life rising higher than duty,—duty whether as due to that humanity which a positive philosophy has now converted into its Deity, or as due to that unknown first cause which modern Pantheism is now beginning to acknowledge as its God,†—duty, but

est l'existence des obstacles infinis qui s'opposent à cette délivrance." *Le Lotus de la Bonne Loi*, p. 517, Paris 1852. See Koeppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, vol. i. p. 220 sq., Berlin 1867; and compare Schlaginweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, p. 16 (Lond. and Leipz. 1863).

* On the meaning of the word Nirvâna ("blowing out, extinction of light") see the letter of Max Müller, *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol. i. p. 279 sq.

† Even in systems as hopeless as that of Hartmann there seem to be clear indications of a feeling after a First Cause who exists, consciously or (according to this writer) unconsciously, behind all phenomena, and of whom they are the evolution. See the sad but still interesting chapter "Das Unbewusste und der Gott des Theismus," in the *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, pp. 535—561, Berl. 1874. This sort of half-pantheism, according to which creation becomes a sort of necessary evolution of the Deity, as it has been called, has been referred mainly to the last form of Schelling's religious philosophy, and has been traced in some of the teaching of Schleiermacher. In such a system causality seems to have taken the place of purpose, and an all-working power that of an

not either devotion or love. Even in that which may perhaps be deemed the highest non-Christian estimate of life's truest purpose, the view sketched out in the second of Mr. Mill's posthumous treatises on Religion,—even in that estimate in which the non-Christian philosopher seems almost willing to adopt the very language of an inspired Apostle,* and inferentially to encourage man to be “a fellow-labourer with the Highest,”—even here, no true idea of love of that Highest can be properly said in any degree to hold a place. We are to help in the great strife; but the Being whom we are to aid, though possibly ultimately destined to triumph, is but contriving Goodness foiled by the element around it,—a Being whom it may be possible to sympathize with, but to whom love in its highest and holiest sense could never be offered. The Christian's ideal of love towards God,—love based not only on the ever-present remembrance of His redeeming mercy, but on the adoring recognition of infinite excellences and exhaustless perfections,†—could never

omnipotent will. See Ebrard, *Apologetik*, § 94, p. 195 sq.; compare Rothe, *Dogmatik*, § 37, part i. p. 135 sq.

* See 1 Cor. iii. 9. In the passage referred to, Mr. Mill does not definitely accept the view as a substitute for the religion of humanity, but regards it as one that may be held in conjunction with it. *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 117.

† Though we may probably admit, with Martensen (*Christian Ethics*, § 106, p. 320, Transl.), that worship of the depths of God's love in Christ, and gratitude in its purest conceivable form, supply the deepest motive, still we must certainly not fail, with the same writer, to recognise, as co-existent with this,

be realized in the case we are now considering: the purest glow of sublimated earthly affection might animate our co-operation, but it would never rise to that love to God which is felt by the Christian fellow-labourer with a Father and a God, that love of which an Apostle has given us one most blessed and most mystic criterion—viz., that dwelling in that love is “dwelling in God, and God in us.”* The heart craves for the infinite, and could never give its highest offering to limited Wisdom, and well-wishing but overmatched Beneficence.

If these remarks are true in reference to what is confessedly a higher system, or, at any rate, a system that has some views partially coincident with those of Christianity, still more will they be found true when we turn to other and lower systems of non-Christian philosophy. In some of these systems

and included in it, that adoring love which loves God for His own sake. It may be true that this last form of love was exaggerated by Fénelon—still no sensitive Christian can deny, to use the language of Martensen, “that there are moments in which gratitude and regard to our own felicity do not appear as such but as though melted and absorbed in the universal element of adoration.” *Ibid.* p. 322 : compare Plitt, *Evang. Glaubenslehre* § 60, vol. ii. p. 142 sq. ; and generally, on the Christian conception of the love of God, Bp. Butler, *Sermons*, xiii., xiv.

* 1 John iv. 16. See the comments on this expression in the excellent and suggestive commentary on this epistle by Haupt p. 202 sq. There are few recent expository treatises on separate portions of Holy Scripture which, for care and thoroughness of exegesis, deserve more warmly to be commended than the work just referred to.

either no answer of any kind is given to the vital question now before us, or, if given, is so formulated as practically to point only to a bleak self-abnegation* that at last loses itself in the old shadows of Nirvâna, or in that non-existent existence in which early Chinese philosophy has sought for itself a God,† and which modern philosophy is now making its own. . . . What conception, for example, of life and life's purpose could be more sad than that of the pessimistic philosophy of Hartmann? Life a series of illusions; first, as regards happiness in this world; next, as regards all that might be hoped for in a world to come; and thirdly, as regards even that last and lingering paradise of modern philosophy, the future evolution of the universe:‡ life thus a series

* In his essay on the fundamental principles of Buddhism, Koeppen quotes a sentence from Schopenhauer as fairly expressing its tenets in a revived form. *Die Religion des Buddha*, vol. i. p. 213, Berl. 1857.

† See the short but interesting sketch of the system of Lao Tse in Ampere, *La Science et Les Lettres en Orient*, p. 435. The work (*Tao-te-king*, or "Le Livre de la Voie et de la Vertue") of this really remarkable philosopher on which the system of so-called Taoism is founded, has been translated in French by Stanislas Julien, Paris 1842, and more recently by Chalmers (Lond. 1868), and by Von Strauss (Leipz. 1870), and will certainly repay the trouble of reading. It is an instance of a philosophy out of which has emerged a religion which still exercises considerable influence among the more cultivated Chinese thinkers. See the excellent introduction of Stan. Julien prefixed to his translation.

‡ See Hartmann, *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, p. 728. The practical results of this most joyless system will be found in

of illusions, and life's highest purpose the conversion of all willing into non-willing, and of all nobler effort into joyless co-operation with the dark movements of an unconscious Intelligence.

And this is the practical purpose of life which the last modern philosophy would teach us is to take the place of life's purpose as indicated by Christianity. This is the dreary voice of the future which is to silence the blessed and inspiriting call to be Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto the end,—the call to co-operate with Him, aye, and to overcome with Him, and having overcome with Him to abide with Him for ever, and in His adorable presence, to realize, it may be in ever-increased and increasing measures,* the holy and eternal fulness of the kingdom prepared for us from the foundations of the world. Could contrast be more startling? Could illustration be more

ch. xiv. p. 762 sq., and in ch. xv. p. 772 sq. The termination of all things and the goal towards which the "Weltprozess" is directed is defined by this writer as "die Aufhebung alles Wollens in's absolute Nichtwollen, mit welchem bekanntlich alles sogenannte Dasein (Organisation, Materie, u.s.w.) *eo ipso* verschwindet und aufhört." P. 764.

* That there will be progress in the blessed future is apparently the conception which has most commended itself to all reverent and devout thinkers: "In that blessed kingdom there will be an endless progress, because there, in that land of perfection, there are new perennial springs, uncreated possibilities of new joy and new activity, new knowledge, and new love." Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 290, p. 485 (Transl.) See Rothe, *Dogmatik*, § 45, part iii. p. 131.

complete of the superiority of the Christian answer, even if we take only the comparatively low ground of its supplying the best conceivable incentive to noble and disinterested action?

IV. One further and most serious question yet remains, which, in a lecture like the present, on life's deeper questions, we cannot leave wholly unnoticed. If our first question (Whence?) led us to gaze backward into the unknown past, our last question must direct our thoughts to the veiled and almost equally impenetrable future. Whither? To what goal are all life's purposes directing us? Into what mysterious realms have all the nations and families of the earth already passed? Where now are the noble, the brave, the holy, and the faithful? Where are they who were permitted to realize in many things life's highest purposes? and where are they by whom those purposes were left unfulfilled, or to whom they were unrevealed and unknown?

To this most vital and personal of all human questions what answer can religion or philosophy return?

What, first, is the answer of Christianity? Again, as in former answers, distinct, comprehensive, and, as a true answer must be and ought to be, reactive upon the whole course and development of earthly life. In substance we know the answer well; yet, as no other of the answers to life's questions have been more clogged with what is opinionable or addititious, let us state it in all the breadth and simplicity of Scriptural

truth. If the anxious heart asks, Whither? the answer of Revealed Religion is broadly and substantially this—To a realm of waiting and interspace; and thence, after the reunion of the soul with an incorruptible, and perhaps morally conformable body,* to abodes either of eternal joy or of eternal woe, according to the judgment which He who is both God and man will pass, when this æon closes, and the æons of eternity begin.

This is the Christian answer; differing on the one hand, from the answers of nearly all the early religions and theistic philosophies of the past in the stress it lays upon the future reunion of soul and body,†

* This is the opinion of Cudworth, *Intellectual System*, Book I. chap. v. p. 792, Lond. 1678. It need, however, hardly be said that here all is conjectural. It does, however, seem to be the clear teaching of Scripture that there will be a resurrection of the body, in the case of the unjust as well as the just. See Acts xxiv. 15; and comp. 2 Cor. v. 10, and Dan. xii. 2.

† It is certainly worthy of remark that some of the hymns of the Rig-Veda appear distinctly to recognise the idea of a future union of the “unborn part” with its ancient body in a glorified form. See Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v. p. 303, sq. The following are the words of one of these ancient hymns: “Let his eye go to the sun, his breath to the wind. Go to the sky, and to the earth, according to (the) nature (of thy several parts); or go to the waters, if that is suitable for thee; enter into the plants with thy members. . . . Give up again, Agni, to the Fathers, him who comes offered to thee with oblations. Putting on life, let him approach (his) remains; let him meet with his body, O Fātavedas! Whatever part of thee any black bird, or ant, or serpent, or beast of prey has torn, may Agni restore to thee all that!” *Rig-Veda Sanhita*, x. 16. 1 (Muir, p. 298 sq.).

and on the permanence of existence under relations to some extent analogous to the experience of the past;—differing thus from earlier systems, and, on the other hand, differing from all modern theistic philosophies, not only in what has been stated, but especially in this—the dread significance assigned to mortal life as conditioning the whole life of the future. And is it not in these very differences that we recognise the essential truth of this answer? Can we conceive to ourselves existence without some medium by which we receive impression from that which is not ourselves? Have not all philosophers, whether Pagan or Christian, who have reasoned upon the unclothed state, felt themselves constrained to admit or to postulate some sort of quasi-corporeity of soul,* even before its final investiture with the body of the future? Again, if we are to exist, can we deem it possible that deeds done in an earlier stage of a continuous existence are to have no conditioning influence on the stages of it that may follow? If

* Cudworth has collected several striking passages from early Christian writers, in which this very natural view has been distinctly maintained. See *Intellectual System*, bk. I. ch. v. p. 799 sq. The same opinion would also seem to be the prevailing one among Christian thinkers at the present time. Comp. Van Oosterzee, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 143, p. 787 sq. (Transl.); Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 276, p. 460 sq. (Transl.). A full discussion of the subject, on its psychological side, will be found in Fichte (J. H.), *Anthropologie*, § 139, sq., p. 327 sq., Leipz. 1860, and in the interesting tract of Splittgerber. *Tod, Fortleben, und Auferstehung*, p. 66 sq., ed. 2, Halle 1869

all real knowledge, apart from revelation, is to be considered as limited to our own experiences, and to inferences drawn from our own being and existence, may we not appeal to that knowledge as really incompatible with any other than the Christian answer, unless indeed we agree to evade all answers, and tacitly accept for our future that half-veiled Nirvâna towards which all modern philosophy seems ultimately to point ; or else consent to lose ourselves amid the shadows of that revived Pantheism which we are now told is soon to become the Christianity of the future ?* Can we set aside all the dread teaching of consequences ?† Can we persuade ourselves that we can sow, and yet that no reaping time will follow ; that there is no moral continuity, and that what can be seen and recognised here in clearest tendency will not hereafter pass into definite moral realization ?

* The judgment of Hartmann is that the Jewish-Christian view of the world must either wholly die out, or become pantheistic. *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, ch. viii. p. 558. It has been said, somewhat similarly, by a modern writer of our own country, that "Our growing recognition of the oneness of the Universe, and we must add, of its infinity, compels us to identify Deity with that absolute existence which involves all in itself." Picton, *Mystery of Matter*, p. 485. The true aspects of Pantheism on its better, as well as on its worse, side are candidly stated by Christlieb, *Moderne Zweifel*, p. 202 sq., Bonn 1870.

† It has been justly said, "The consequences of sinful acts may long outlast repentance, and it is not certain that they will be altogether obliterated in any state of being whatever." Murphy, *Scientific Bases of Belief*, ch. xxii. p. 308. See above p. 262, note.

Surely, for once, we may take the very words of a non-Christian philosopher, and accept Mr. Mill's most true and most monitory statement that "such as we have been, or have made ourselves before the change, such we shall enter into the life hereafter."*

Well we know that questions of dreadful import yet remain, and that difficulties which the noblest minds, from the days of Origen † down to our own, have never been able to surmount, lie involved in the answer we have formulated. We know it: we know too that, in the mighty evolutions of God's fatherly purposes, there may well be dispensations which, with our present knowledge, we can do no more than conceive as included and involved among the possibilities of a limitless future. We may hope,—nay, if we will, we may draw some fleeting argument from the present growing tendency so to hope; but if we only consent to abide by the teaching and experiences of life,—putting, for a moment, all that Scripture has revealed utterly out of sight,—we still *must* logically accept the darker side of the Christian answer as well as the brighter. If the sharpest of all the sorrows of this life is expressed in those two sad words "too late," what real ground have we for hoping that there will be no "too late" in the unknown Whither, on which our

* Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 271.

† For an exact and connected statement of the views of this great thinker on the subject here alluded to, see the excellent work of Redepenning, *Origenes*, part ii. p. 444 sq., Bonn 1846.

thoughts are at present resting? * If we permit ourselves to hope that He who so loved us that He spared not His only Son will never resign to endless misery or to endless night one living soul that His love has called into being,—yet let us never close our eyes to the plain fact that all the teaching supplied by life's experiences, and by all we can observe of the permanence of moral consequences, points, sternly and unmistakably, exactly in the contrary direction. Nay, who shall say that the deliberate and continued rejection of a love such as that shown in the Redemption may not carry with it something that in its very nature belongs to the fixed and the irrevocable?

But not further to dwell upon this particular aspect of the answer, and to return to the general contrast between the answer of Christianity and those given

* For the expansion of this most serious thought, see Martensen, *Christian Dogmatics*, § 286, p. 478 (Transl.). It is with justice that Van Oosterzee warns us "to distrust every mode of regarding the doctrine of Salvation which, in its foundation and tendency, fails to do justice to the seriousness of the conception of an everlasting *Too Late*, and of the holiness of a grace which cannot indeed be exhausted, but can just as little be mocked." *Christian Dogmatics*, § 149, p. 808 (Transl.). In very similar language, though he does not accept the ordinary theory of beings everlastingly condemned, Nietzsche also reminds us, that for those "who have resisted conversion, and remain unconverted, there is in nowise any hope of conversion and sanctification in the other world." *System of Christian Doctrine*, § 219, p. 396 (Transl.).

by other systems, can we point to any other form of answer that can, for one moment, be compared with the answer of Christianity, as similarly satisfying the aspirations of the soul, or as equally coinciding with the moral teaching of experience? So far is this from being the case, that we may observe that in all modern systems either the question is left unanswered, as lying wholly beyond the realm of experience, or the answer given is such as to amount to little more than an admission of the possibility of an existence after death, or, at any rate (as we have already noticed),* of the liberty of entertaining such a hope without the risk of being deemed utterly irrational. In purely scientific systems, all that is conceded is that there exists no evidence against the immortality of the soul except such as is implied in the absence of any evidence in its favour. In theistic systems, apart from revelation, we find no argument of any real validity for endurance after death, except that

* See above, p. 227, note. The remark of Mill appears to be just—that the argument for the immortality of the soul from its own nature and supposed attributes requires this first to be shown,—that the attributes in question are really not attributes of the body, but of a separate substance. Deep as is apparently the inward persuasion of probably the greater part of mankind that the soul is separable from and survives the body, it yet may be conceded that of the current (non-Scriptural) arguments in favour of it, hardly any seem to carry with them real conviction. These arguments are briefly, but clearly, stated in Rothe, *Dogmatik*, part iii. § 124, p. 293.

which is founded on the Creator's love ;* and even this is only admitted to be valid in the case of a world so constituted that we could infer from its constitution that its Creator was not only loving but omnipotent.†

Answers thus limited and conditional can surely never satisfy any really loving and searching heart. Nay, it is simply inconceivable that such mere absence of negation could for a moment be tolerated as any form of answer to the question before us, if there were not, deep in the souls of those who profess to be satisfied with such an answer, *a supplemental persuasion*, founded on the traditions of the race,‡ or on some ineradicable feeling which philosophy cannot account for, that there is a Whither, and that that Whither has been prepared for us by a just and beneficent God.

* Ebrard is quite right in pointing to this as the firmest and surest ground for a belief in existence after death. See his *Apologetik*, § 102, p. 211, Gütersloh 1874. The second part of this useful work has just appeared, and (with the first part) may be justly characterized as one of the most important of recent treatises in vindication of the truth of Christianity. The examination of the different opposing systems is impartial, and apparently founded on a careful study of their general characteristics.

† See Mill, *Three Essays on Religion*, p. 209.

‡ "The result," says Prof. Jowett, "seems to be that those who have thought most deeply on the immortality of the soul, have been content to rest their belief on the agreement of the more enlightened part of mankind, and on the inseparable connection of such a doctrine with the existence of God." *Dialogues of Plato*, vol. i. p. 391.

Of all the deeper questions relating to human life, this is the one in which appeal may be most persuasively made to "the testimony of the Soul."* The answer of Christianity may have its shadows, and to some minds may not seem free from all concomitant difficulties; but if ever answer were vouched for by every deeper feeling of the human heart, and confirmed by every conviction that could influence life and stand the strain of approaching death, it is the answer we have given: the answer, not only of Christianity, but of every truer tradition of the race;† the answer that, in substance at least, can appeal to a testimony which no race or age has withheld from it—the *testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*.‡

Such is the last of the four great answers which Christianity has given to the deeper questions relating to the mystery of human life: such the grounds on

* See the striking chapter (cap. iv.) in the short but very remarkable treatise of Tertullian, *De Testimonio Animæ*, vol. i. p. 613 sq. (ed. Migne).

† The numerous references in the earlier books of the Rig-Veda to the doctrine of a future life will be found in Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol. v. p. 284 sq.; see above, p. 272, note. According to Spiegel (*Avesta*, vol. i. p. 15 sq.) the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was not clearly set forth in the earlier parts of the Zend-Avesta. It is admitted, however, that there are traces of it even in the earlier parts (vol. iii. p. lxxv.); and in later portions it is set forth distinctly: see, for example, *Khorda-Avesta*, xxxv. 89 (vol. iii. p. 184).

‡ Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, cap. xvii. vol. i. p. 377 (ed. Migne).

which we now seem justified in asserting that, in reference to all life's deeper questions, Christianity does supply answers more satisfying and more inwardly convincing than those of any other religion or philosophy which the world has ever known

The difficult subject I have attempted to bring before you is now brought to its close. My lecture, though studiously compressed, has, I fear, considerably exceeded the limits usually prescribed to essays such as the present. Still I cannot but feel how utterly inadequate is all that has been said, when contrasted with the profound nature of the subjects on which we have been presuming to dwell. No doubt the task has been a hard one. To deal in one passing lecture with subjects which for ages have exercised the keenest thoughts, and awakened the deepest anxieties of the human heart; to take in one cursory view the varied solutions that have been offered in ancient philosophies or half formulated in early religions; to catch the true aspect of the protean forms of changing thought on topics where hopes and feelings often take the place of logic and reason; to analyse the fleeting elements of modern non-Christian answers, and fairly to give the results of elaborate systems which were never constructed to bear such homely tests as here have been applied to them;—all this may well be beyond the powers of ordinary thinkers; and it may be only natural to feel dissatisfied with an inadequacy

which, however, may carry with it, in some measure, its own passing excuse.

But, be that as it may, I do humbly pray to God that these thoughts may do some little good to two classes of thinkers, for both of whom I feel profound sympathy. First, to those who keenly feel all the difficulties that seem involved in the answers which a current and conventional interpretation of Scripture has supplied to them,—who feel the contradictions in their system, and strive heartily to believe in spite of them, and to hope where reason and belief seem utterly at issue. Secondly, to those who feel all these things so keenly that they have, in a kind of despair, cast off all the loving bonds that once united them to the Christian faith, and are now pursuing their darkening path through the mysteries of life, with a hope that seems dying out with each step of their cheerless wandering.

To thinkers of both these classes I trust I may have done some good. To the one class it is my hope that I may have indirectly shown that the true answers of Scripture on these fundamental questions are broad and clear,—widely different, indeed, from the narrow answers that in all ages, and in our own no less than in those preceding it, have usurped the place of the free and simple answers of the Book of Life.* To the other class it is my humble prayer

* Bp. Jeremy Taylor has not hesitated to speak on this subject very distinctly in his *Liberty of Prophesying*; see sect.

that I have made it plain that in Christ and in His Gospel are alone to be found those answers of life which they may have ceased to search for, because faith has gone and love has all but followed it. There are thousands of cultivated men and women who are now in this melancholy interspace between living faith and withering doubt; who are sadly and silently giving themselves over to a cheerless resignation, and who have formed the resolution to search no more into the inscrutable, and to leave to the adjustments or self-solutions of the future what has now become to them only the baffling and insoluble.

All such have lost, consciously or unconsciously, two sensibilities. They have ceased to feel what sin is; and they have given up all real and vital belief in a Redeemer. Jesus Christ, their only and personal Saviour, has faded into a mere loving human Teacher; or if some faith yet lingers, into little more than the possible Sosiosh of an old pagan creed.* Conviction

8, 10, al. In the Epistle Dedicatory to this remarkable treatise he states it as his opinion "that there are but few doctrines of Christianity that were ordered to be preached to all the world, to every person, and made a necessary article of his explicit belief." *Works*, vol. vii. p. 407 (ed. Heber).

* The hope in a future Helper who is to appear at the end of all things, and to establish a kingdom of joy and blessedness, finds expression in several passages in the Zend-Avesta: see *Vendidad*, Fargard xix. 18, and the note of Spiegel *in loc.* (vol. i. p. 244); comp. *Yaçna* xxvi. 33, lviii. 3. In the *Khorda-Avesta* (or smaller Avesta,—designed mainly for private devotion), we find two very explicit notices: xxix. 129 (Spiegel, vol.

of sin, and longing for redemption,—these are the two holy threads through the labyrinth of life,* and are themselves the substance and essence of every answer on which we have been meditating. These they have lost. . . . If these poor words of mine may be permitted to help them in any degree again to receive the blessed guiding of those golden threads, these words will not have been spoken entirely in vain.

iii. p. 135), xxxv. 89 (vol. iii. p. 183). On the name (the Helper) and its etymology, see Spiegel's Introduction to vol. iii., p. lxxv.

* “La foi Chrétienne ne va principalement qu'à établir ces deux choses: la corruption de la nature et la rédemption de Jésus Christ.” Pascal, *Pensées*, p. 10 (155), ed. Faugère.

THE END.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

(INSTITUTED A.D. 1870.)

President.

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

Chairman of Council.

THE EARL OF HARROWBY, K.G.

Offices.—13, BUCKINGHAM STREET, STRAND, LONDON.

The justification of the existence of the Christian Evidence Society is to be found in the present prevalence of scepticism or of unbelief in various classes of Society. The existence of such scepticism (in varying degrees) is generally recognised by all who are acquainted with contemporary thought.

The following facts will indicate the importance of maintaining a special agency prepared to deal with this subject.

1. Amongst the working classes the principles of *Secularism* (that is, of practical Atheism) are being widely and persistently disseminated in all the large towns of Great Britain, and in our manufacturing districts, by means of Lectures and the circulation of infidel literature. Several periodicals are issued in support of secularist principles; Lecturers are constantly engaged in proclaiming infidel doctrines throughout the country; whilst clubs are formed in all the larger centres of population in order to promote the propaganda of infidelity, which has its headquarters in London.

2. Amongst the more educated classes, the existence of scepticism may be proved from the wide circulation obtained by books which are opposed to Christianity, or to belief in a personal God, and from the character of the articles often to be found in some of our popular Magazines or Reviews.

The Christian Evidence Society does not impose upon itself any limited course of action, but seeks, in every way which presents itself, to act both upon those who have taken up positions inimical to Christianity, and upon those who are in danger of being led astray from the truth of God.

Especially is it the wish of its members to expound and defend the evidences of Christianity, to encourage the general study of them, and to prepare Christian men, in private and public, by the pen and by the living voice, to engage in conflict with prevailing infidelity.

The Committee have adopted the following METHODS OF OPERATION with the view of counteracting the progress of unbelief :—

1. Popular Lectures, either setting forth the positive evidences of Christianity, or rebutting the opinions of unbelievers, are constantly being delivered both in London and throughout the country, either in halls, or the open air.

2. Lectures or Sermons intended to deal with the forms of unbelief which influence the more educated classes are organized from time to time on suitable occasions.

3. Several volumes of Lectures have been published (one in French), some of which have had a very large circulation ; and two important works, dealing with the objections made in two parts of the book called "Supernatural Religion," have also been written at the request of the Committee. A Text-Book is in course of preparation. Articles on Christian Evidences are inserted in current periodicals.

4. A scheme for the formation of *classes* for the study of Christian Evidences has been drawn up ; and all reasonable help is offered for the adaptation of this scheme to the requirements of Parishes and Congregations, or of Educational Institutions in various parts of the country. Prizes and Certificates are offered to Students who, on examination, prove themselves to be meritorious. There is a special examination of pupils in Schools.

5. The movements of the Secularists are noted ; their publications are examined ; and the Lecturers of the Society are supplied with the means of answering them ; a consulting Library is provided.

6. Steps are taken to bring the subject of Christian Evidences before Clerical Meetings, Congresses, Conferences, etc. ; and information is supplied to all inquiries on matters relating to Apologetic Literature.

The Committee acknowledge with thankfulness that they have received much encouragement from many quarters, both at home and abroad, in prosecuting these various branches of their work ; and it is their earnest desire still further to extend and develope that work, in dependence upon the Divine blessing, as opportunity may offer, and as funds are placed at their disposal. The limit of funds is the limit of usefulness.

The *last day of every month* was some time ago selected as a day for special intercession on behalf of the Christian Evidence Society, and on behalf of those for whose sake the work is carried on. The Committee earnestly trust that all readers will join with them in praying that it may please God to bless the measures adopted by the Society for reclaiming those who through doubt or unbelief have wandered from Him, and to give wisdom and a right judgment to those who are engaged in this responsible and often difficult work.

CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY.

OBJECTS.

To defend Christianity as a Divine Revelation.

To controvert the errors of Atheists, Pantheists, and other opponents of Christianity.

To counteract the energetic propagandism of Infidelity, especially among the uneducated.

To meet the difficulties and strengthen the faith of the doubting and perplexed.

To instruct the young in the Evidences of Christianity.

METHODS OF OPERATION.

SERMONS and LECTURES on phases of modern unbelief.

POPULAR CONTROVERSIAL ADDRESSES on the Evidences of Christianity, and Discussions in Halls and in the open air.

CLASSES for the Study of Christian Evidences, and EXAMINATIONS with award of prizes for meritorious students.

PUBLICATION of WORKS to meet the current objections to Christianity, adapted to the educated and to the uneducated.

GRANTS of suitable Works to Free Public Libraries, Young Men's Associations, Mechanics' Institutes, etc.

Distribution of TRACTS.

NEED OF IT.

The unsettled state of opinion in various classes of society, especially among the young and inexperienced, with regard to the existence and character of God, Christ and Christianity, and the Holy Scriptures.

The wide circulation of infidel works and of other literature calculated to unsettle religious opinion.

The indefatigable propagation of secularist views by lectures and otherwise.

SPECIAL CLAIM TO EXTENDED SUPPORT.

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